

Bandwagon

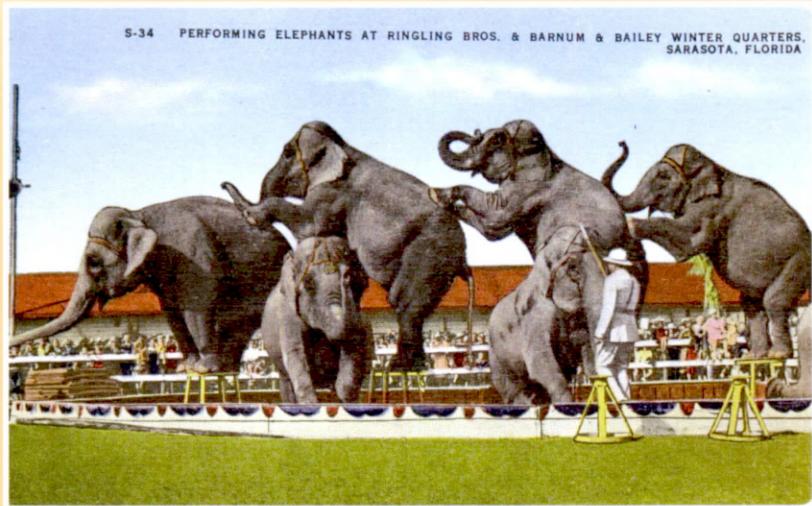
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The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

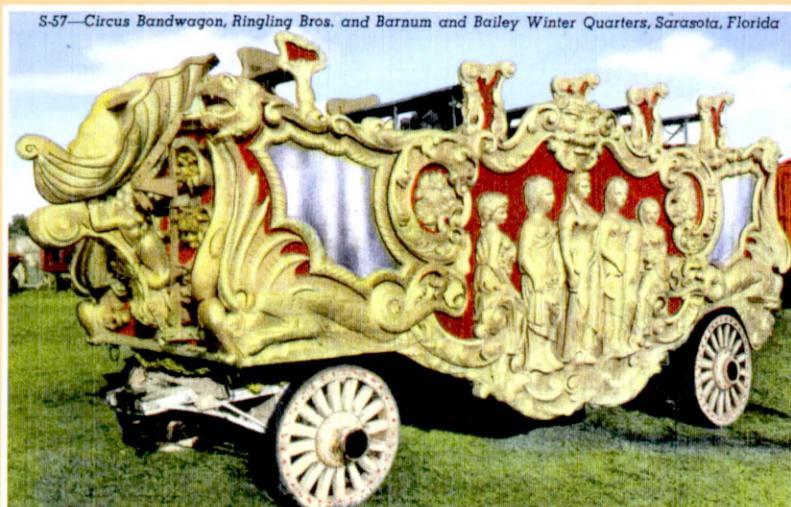
CHS CONVENTION ★ OCTOBER 12-15, 2016

Sarasota, Florida



You won't want to miss this historic celebration of the importance of Sarasota in the evolution of the American circus. Enjoy in depth examinations of the fascinating mix of personalities, localities and sensibilities that created a unique show business community. Visit the Big Cat Habitat, The Circus Arts Conservatory, and meet members of the circus community at Sarasota's Showfolks Club. Explore the rich history of the circus at The Ringling Museum and enjoy performances at the Ringling International Arts Festival.

It's Sarasota in October!



Schedule of Events

Wednesday, October 12

- CHS Board Meeting
- Registration
- Reception honoring Buckles and Barbara Woodcock at Showfolks of Sarasota

Thursday, October 13

- Speakers
- Tour of the Ringling Archives and Circus Museum
- Annual CHS Auction

Friday, October 14

- CHS Membership Meeting
- Feld Entertainment Studios Tour

*Note: Everyone going on the Feld tour **must** have a photo ID, conference name tag, and wear closed-toed shoes. The tour requires walking at least two miles.*

- Speakers
- Circus Film Night

Saturday, October 15

- Viewpoint Lecture with Janet Davis
- Tour of the Circus Arts Conservatory and Presentations
- Annual CHS Banquet at the Big Cat Habitat with Open House and Show

Lunch will be provided on Thursday and Friday as part of the registration fee.

See the CHS website for additions to the schedule in the near future! Also on the website look for information on additional pre-convention activities taking place Wednesday October 12th including a tour of Spotlight Graphics and a visit to the International Showmen's Museum in Gibsonton. Both require an RSVP.

This years' host hotel is the Hampton Inn, located at 975 University Parkway, Sarasota FL 34243.

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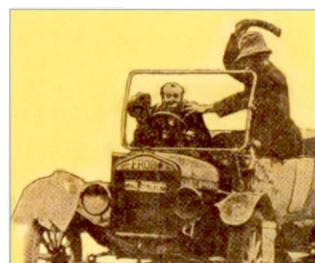
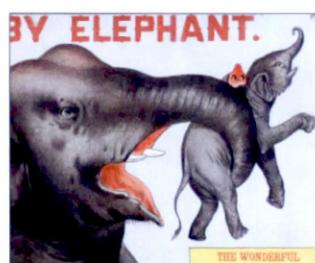
Website and Back Issues

An index of Bandwagon
articles from earlier issues
is available online at www.circushistory.org. Back issues
are available from the Office of
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Bandwagon

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society
2016 Volume 60, Number 3

Table of Contents

**Notes from the Editor**

4

On the Covers

5

**Mose McQuitty's Band and
Minstrel Days, 1899-1937**

6

by Alex Albright

**Bridgeport: Barnum's
First Baby Elephant**

48

by Morgan Ellison

Confessions of the Clowns

52

by A. Morton Smith

Carl E. Elwell

58

Photographic Scrapbook Collection

by Deborah Walk

Circus Historical Society

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Mission Statement

"To preserve, promote, and share through education the history and cultural significance of the circus and allied arts, past and present."

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Notes from the Editor

I feel it is important to start this issue with a request that if you have ever considered submitting your research to *Bandwagon*, now is the time to do it! We are fortunate to have a few reliable contributors, and of course a wealth of fascinating historic articles, but for our journal to continue to be meaningful and engaging to the CHS community and beyond then it is important to broaden our offerings and deepen the research that we are sharing. Even research that does not feel totally complete could make an excellent article with images and supporting material. Moreover, publishing that research may bring forth new information.

This, the third issue of 2016, has evolved from its original intent of a special issue. Our anchor story, the detailed account of the career of minstrel Mose McQuitty, stays true to that theme, with an interesting look at McQuitty's seasons on the road with a variety of circuses. The author, Alex Albright, was fortunate to have McQuitty's personal route book of his travels, and so gives a real depth to the story of a traveling musician in the early twentieth century. A special thanks to Fred Dahlinger for his work editing Albright's original manuscript.

The personal memory keeping of a scrapbook is also explored in a photo spread of pages from albums created by circus fan Carl Elwell. This particular set of images reflects on the circus of sixty years ago on the cusp of great changes. Deborah Walk, former CHS President and Assistant Director of Circus and Legacy at The Ringling Museum, provides a background on Elwell and his creations. The marvelous images of the scrapbooks are the result of the very hard work of Claire Smithers who, with the guidance of Ron Levere, photographed all of Elwell's book for future availability in a digital form.

Drawing further from the talented staff of The Ringling, Morgan Ellison, a summer intern who organized the Barnum papers, provides us with the tale of Baby Bridgeport, Barnum's baby elephant.

As always, a special thanks to John and Mardi Wells who manage to keep us on track and to design our wonderful publication.

A couple of weeks ago, I had the immense pleasure of meeting Richard Reynolds in person. I am so lucky to be in Sarasota and find myself so frequently in the company of historians, performers, and others of the big circus community. I hope that many of our CHS members will enjoy the same privilege by joining us this October for what will be a wonderful, entertaining and educational convention for the Circus Historical Society.

JLP

On the Covers

by Jennifer Lemmer Posey

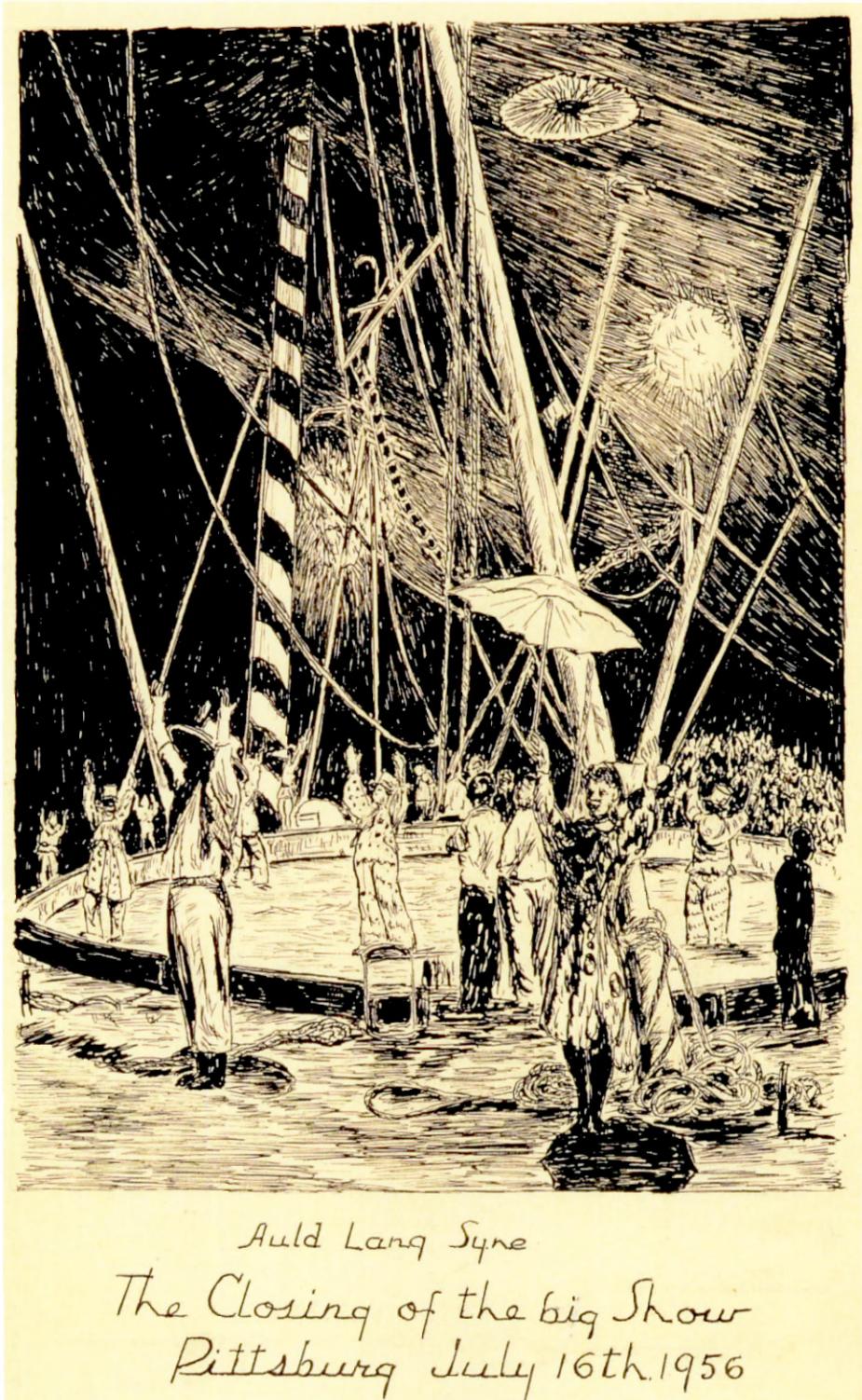
Circus yesterday, today, and tomorrow

The images on our covers bring us back to the American circus of 1956. Photographed by a circus fan with great passion and preserved by him in order to share the beauty and magic of the entertainment he so loved. The story of Carl Elwell and his wonderful photographs is explained elsewhere in this issue. As for the images on the covers, the front cover is Elwell's hand-tinted photograph of the spreading of the Ringling big top canvas in Akron, Ohio. The tent would only be raised three more times. On this page is Elwell's illustration of the final performance under canvas—the singing of *Auld Lang Syne*, marking the farewell to the era of the Ringling circus under canvas.

There are few moments in circus history that are so clearly defined in terms of their importance and long reaching impact as July 16, 1956.

The image on the back cover is also from the 1956 season. Clown Carleton Smith poses on the lot of the Geo. W. Cole circus along with one of the show's elephants. A classic image of two iconic symbols of the American circus.

Sixty years later those of us who are passionate about the circus arts and their past, present and future, find ourselves once again in a moment of great significance. The American circus is in another time of transition, adapting itself—its logistics, its attractions, its appearance—to appeal to audiences of the 21st century. We as a community who love the circus and its history can reflect on it as a living art form, one that grows and contracts as it evolves to entertain audiences of the next generation.



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Cole's Imperial Band

OF

PHILADELPHIA, PA.
(Members of Local 591 A. F. of M.)

ADVISORY BOARD

Moses McQuitty
Bernard Archer
William H. Hollis
Adolphus Thomas
Harry Thomas
George Baquet
W. Frank Washington
John H. Banks
Randolph Smith
John Veney

RICHARD & PRINGLE'S FAMOUS MINSTRELS (DIRECTION OF HOLLAND & FILKINS)

PART I.

THE HUNTSMEN "AT HOME"

(Staged by Jerry Mills)

Password—"Pleasure"

The President—Whitney Viney

David D. Smith (Jester) Manzie Campbell
Jakie Smith (Jester) Bennie Jones

Guest of Honor—Clarence Powell

Vocal Selections from the Following

Tallyho's Gone Away The Huntsmen
Why Not Sing Wearin' of the Green David D. Smith
Silver Threads Among the Gold John A. Watts
When the Twilight Comes to Kiss the Rose Goodnight Walter Robinson

The Alabama Jubilee Jakie Smith

I Ain't Got Nobody Manzie Campbell

A Little Bit of Heaven Niles Hunter

Norway Niles Hunter

Rufus Johnson's Harmony Band Bennie Jones

When the Bell in the Lighthouse Rings Gerard Miller

The Old Bass Viol Gerard Miller

It Can't Be Done Clarence Powell

My Dixie Land and We're With You Woodrow Wilson The Minstrels

OVERTURE SELECTION

WATT'S ORCHESTRA

PART II.

P. G. Lowery

Greatest Cornet Virtuoso of His Race

OUR QUARTETTE

Viney, Hunter, Bryant, Smith, Half a Ton of Harmony.



FROM HARLEM TO



MOSE MCQUITTY'S BAND AND MINSTREL DAYS, 1899-1937

by Alex Albright

Introduction

Mose McQuitty's death in 1937 was big news in the *Chicago Defender*: a boldface obit—not just the headline—called him “a great personality” and “one of the most noted baritones and bass players on the boards.” The *Defender*, the main black audience newspaper for professional entertainers in the 1930s, summarized his career as “one of many high lights that carried him from the bottom of the ladder to the lofty heights of fame.” Few concrete details accompanied the obit to indicate the extent of McQuitty's fame; a note that members of the Silas Green from New Orleans show had donated funds “for the famous musical master” was the only indicator of whom he had played for.¹

In a 42-year span, McQuitty performed in all-black bands in every state in the U. S. and province in Canada, crossing the continent numerous times. He toured for five seasons with circuses—Forepaugh-Sells, 1899-1900; Sparks, 1915-1916; and Downie, 1935; three with the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West, 1925-1927; over 27 seasons with black vaudeville shows playing tents and theaters; two seasons with black cast traveling theatrical productions during the Roaring Twenties and Harlem Renaissance; and with orchestras in theaters and clubs in Philadelphia, Kansas City, Los Angeles, New York, Newark, and Jacksonville, Florida.

McQuitty kept a route book until he died in June 1937 in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Its first entry, “Tues. Sept. 22, 1896 Spickards, Mo.” documents a date with P. T. Wright's Nashville Students playing for P. G. Lowery—“the greatest of the sideshow band directors.”² Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, however, extend McQuitty's career back two years prior, when he was with Mahara's Mammoth Colored Minstrels band in August 1894.³ One

of the most popular bands of its era—it was led for two years by W. C. Handy—in one of the first big and popular traveling shows of black troubadours playing outside the minstrel tradition. It hardly qualifies as a “bottom of the ladder” gig. So where his first jobs might have been remains a mystery, as is his birthplace, youth, and education. Also unknown is whether his middle initial is an H or an M, and where the pages are that cover the first two years of his career. But he was clearly an educated man, a serious musician admired by his cohorts, as well as an author who writes about his musical adventures with various shows in frequent reports to black audience newspapers for most of his career.

Physically, his route book is an impressive thing. Kept in an accounts book with 400 of its 450 pages bearing entries, it weighs 12 pounds and measures 12” x 17” x 3”. Included in it are nearly 30 pages of scrapbook items: programs, ticket stubs, business cards, tickets, newspaper clippings, and publicity photos that cover the first 25 years of his career. Most are glued onto the pages, some in a collage fashion, and in this process, the ledger book's page numbers are obscured, but it obviously is missing pages, some taken no doubt as souvenirs, over the years since his death. He appears to have written in most of his routes as they were announced; corrections to those routes are the most frequent kind of additional notation to the consistent entries of day, date, town and city. Sometimes he gets the state wrong; sometimes he's in Indian Territory, before Oklahoma was a state. Several of the towns he and his mates played are now ghost towns; most of the theaters where they played are also gone. But he also includes journal-type entries with many of the dates, and some of these add previously unknown details to shows with which he toured. With Frank Mahara's Minstrels, he finds “Indians galore” at Rushville, South Dakota on April 28, 1904; and on July 23: “no show, saloon fight over slot machine, all in,” followed the next day with “sore head fr. yesterday's brawl.”⁴

Letterhead and programs are among the ephemera that McQuitty added to his scrapbook. At the center right is a photo of McQuitty himself.

Author's Collection

McQuitty's work with P. G. Lowery on Forepaugh-Sells began as circuses were first figuring out how to use an independently owned black vaudeville show—a stand-alone—as a major attraction. Their 1899 season was a landmark in black show business as well as in circus sideshows. A. G. Allen's Minstrels that year became the first African American stand-alone to work a tented season, and Lowery's show with Forepaugh-Sells transformed the circus sideshow into a "full fledged after-show performance," in the process "modernizing" it. Prior, most "colored departments" with circuses had consisted of a band of eight pieces at most, who performed "seated like the circus blues." But Lowery's showcased his stars and presented them on a large stage as vaudeville acts. He was among the first black show producers to abandon the all-male roster typical of the minstrel show. He also insisted on upgrading the sideshow arena, installing for the 1899 season "nicely covered chairs, presenting a neat and attractive appearance."⁵ These upgrades would not have been possible without the support of Forepaugh-Sells' management, especially from the show's general manager, Charles N. Thompson, "unquestionably one of the most popular showmen the outdoor world ever knew."⁶ He was the top/general manager for Burr Robbins, 1880-1881; Forepaugh-Sells, c1898-c1905; and Carl Hagenbeck, 1906; and a highly respected staffer/member of management on W. W. Cole, the Sells Brothers, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Buffalo Bill's Wild West, and Ringling outfits during his long career. The first pioneering showman to reside in the Sarasota-Manatee County area, he also owned and platted the Newtown area for black residents in the nascent residential area, which "suggests a different attitude towards African Americans than was then typical amongst whites."⁷

Lowery's career is well documented in Clifford Watkins' biography, as is his circus work in Watkins' 2004 article in *Bandwagon*.⁸ Lowery was one of "an extraordinary group of African American bandmasters, Renaissance men whose musical prowess was matched by managerial skills, tough-minded perseverance, and a 'ready adaption to the duty required'."⁹ He first worked with the Great Wallace Shows in 1893 and would in later years lead sideshow bands with Hagenbeck-Wallace, Sparks, Cole Bros., and Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows. His Forepaugh-Sells band was, for the most part, comprised of members, like McQuitty, of the band he had led with P. T. Wright's Nashville Students, which worked most of the year. Once their circus season ended in November—with McQuitty in 1899 and 1900—Lowery's show went immediately to a busy

theater season across the West and Midwest before returning in April for Forepaugh-Sells' opening day at Madison Square Garden. This would be a pattern for Lowery for much of his professional life as he built his reputation as "the world's greatest cornet soloist and band member," and also as a first-rate bandleader, music teacher, businessman, and show manager.¹⁰

Beginnings

After the Civil War, as African Americans welcomed freedom and increased economic opportunity, they also were much more readily able to acquire brass musical instruments and the skills to play them. Black bands had been attached to regiments of "colored troops" during the war; at least six served in the Confederacy.¹¹ Richard Schwartz identifies "the most important" African-American regimental bands that served the Union: those attached to the 54th and 55th regiments of Massachusetts, the first regiment of Kansas Colored Volunteers, and the 107th U.S. Colored Infantry. After the war, these musicians began forming and playing in bands wherever they lived, in cities as well as in countless small communities throughout the South. Some re-enlisted, joining military bands attached to the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalries and the 24th and 25th Infantries, which served in the Midwest and West.¹²

Blacks also found educational opportunities to learn music in several northern colleges and conservatories, but a much larger number of musicians got schooled on the job in the traveling minstrel and vaudeville shows that for black show people "provided an essential training and theatrical experience which, at the time, could not have been acquired from any other source."¹³ By the last decade of the 19th century, there were 10,000 bands in the U.S., many of them marching bands, and an untold number of them in black communities where bands attached to service and fraternal organizations sponsored marching bands they could be proud of.¹⁴

The first generation of African American bandleaders like Lowery and Handy came out of what James Weldon Johnson calls the first phase of African American music. It was "mainly upon the training they had gained" [on the minstrel and tented vaudeville stage] that the "second phase rested."¹⁵ The "second phase," the origins of jazz, is still often seen as the first. Those first bandleaders were largely self-taught when they started "trouping," as Handy calls it. Musicians in their home communities helped, both teaching and in providing opportunity to play in local bands, but they had in their early playing days little formal musi-

cal education. Handy also got some instruction from the bandleader of a circus that was stranded in his hometown and bought his first cornet, for \$1.75, from one of this unnamed bandleader's best local students.¹⁶

White Americans had been playing in brass bands as early as 1834 and by the 1850s brass bands had become popular on circuses, usually known by their bandmaster's name: Shelton's American Brass Band with the Van Amburgh & Co. Grand Menagerie; Choate's Brass Band with Jim Myers' Great Show; and Kendall's Brass Band with Spalding and Rogers, for example. Circuses soon began competing with each other to have the best band. By the 1870s, circus bands included both brass and reed instruments, and by the 1880s, circuses had begun to hire musical directors who hired musicians, rather than employing bands that were already organized. To compete with the popularity of big touring bands like John Philip Sousa's, circuses also introduced "center ring concerts" as a major attraction.¹⁷

In the decade that preceded McQuitty's first season with Forepaugh-Sells, African American entertainment forms evolved quickly regardless of the many limitations the players faced. But despite the chaotic times, as black performers made themselves ever more visible, it was clear that the glory days of the white cast minstrel shows depicting the good ol' days before the Civil War were gone, and in their place had come any number of varieties showcasing talented African Americans. Although some black musicians found work on circuses earlier, it wasn't until Solomon T. White began leading the Sells Brothers' band and minstrels in 1889 that blacks began working with any frequency on them.¹⁸

The first major obstacle for black performers seems always to have been to find a way to get on the stage, to make their talents known to audiences larger than their home communities. But because Americans had come to so indelibly associate African American entertainment with what they had grown accustomed to in the "plantation days" depictions and subsequent caricatures and gross exaggerations performed by whites in blackface in shows like Christy's and Dockstader's Minstrels, it was hard for blacks to find a place on any stage, until tastes and expectations changed. Supplanting these shows were Uncle Tom's Cabin touring companies and Jubilee Singers performing "authentic Negro music." By 1900, cakewalks, coon songs and coon shows had become for black entertainers opportunities to gradually distance themselves from the minstrel show's origins. Coon songs especially led to the ragtime

craze that swept America and transformed its music in the early 20th century.

Only in recent years have musicologists begun noting the talent and importance of the early black minstrel show bandsmen, despite such praise as W. C. Handy offered in his 1941 autobiography: the early black minstrel performers represented "the best talent" of their generation, and "the minstrel show was one of the greatest outlets for talented musicians and artists." He adds: "Encylopedists and historians of the American stage have slighted the Negro minstrels." William Lewis, a more recent musicologist, recognizes that the "minstrel show was arguably the most significant performing vehicle" for black bandsmen in the 19th century. Nathan B. Young, Jr., one of the original members of Florida A&M's marching band, in 1910, even suggests that the show tradition of contemporary black college marching bands had its origin in the traveling minstrel show parades. He recalls that the "minstrel bands were super musicians and the amateurs would follow behind them and watch them. And they began to learn and imitate what the minstrel bands did... The minstrel shows came in and they influenced us. The black school bands were playing more like minstrel bands as the time went on." Handy's description of Mahara's parade drum majors supports that claim: "The drum major in a minstrel show was a character to conjure with; not infrequently he stole the parade. Our company had two such virtuosos; in addition to twirling their batons, they added the new wrinkle of tossing them back and forth to each other as they marched."¹⁹

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, blacks had few other options of venues on which to play, and they had no preference for working with a sideshow or a stand-alone playing theaters and tents. What they wanted was trustworthy management, steady pay, and comfortable traveling and working conditions. P. G. Lowery was one of several early black bandmasters who insisted on circus accommodations equal to what white performers were getting, and that his bandsmen not have to double as canvas men or in other laborer jobs. Inferior accommodations caused the black annex band on Sells-Floto to quit en masse in 1912; for at least a couple of years, the show carried no black annex band, and as late as 1923, one black correspondent complains that Sells-Floto still slept black performers "three high" and asked pointedly why all white performers got to sleep "two high."²⁰ The black cast stand-alones were particularly proud of having their own Pullman car for accommodations, although making payments on such an investment also forced some shows into early failure.²¹ Lowery,



Above, Mose McQuitty is at the right.

Author's Collection

The unassuming cover of McQuitty's personal route book which contains his records of traveling as well as letterhead and other ephemera.

Author's Collection



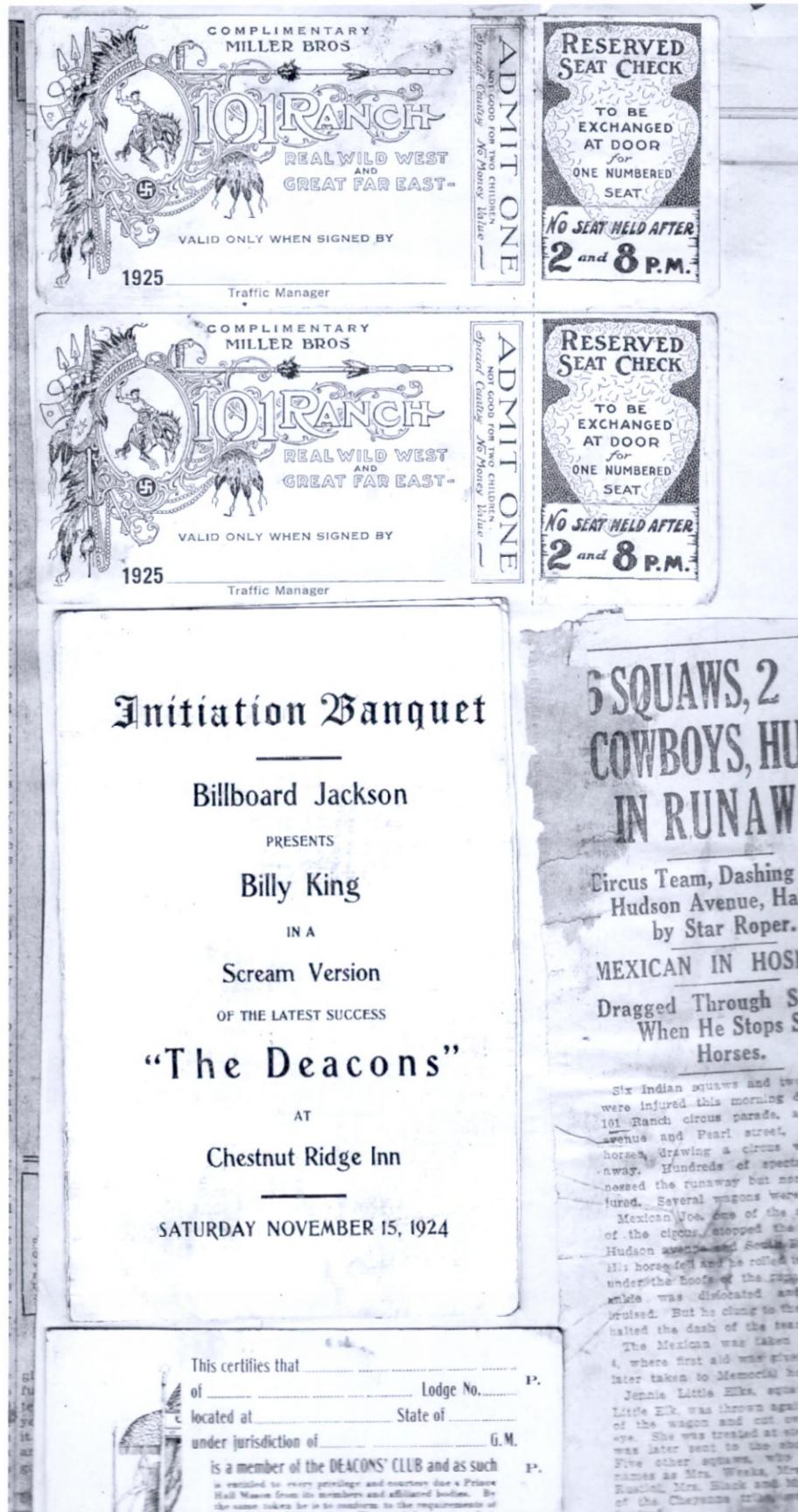
A photograph of P. G. Lowery's band on Forepaugh-Sells, circa 1902, taken by Frederick Glasier.

The Ringling Museum, Frederick Glasier Glass Plate Negative Collection

Sat.	June 5.	Sheridan.	Wyo.
Sun.	6.	Sunday.	"
Mon.	7.	Buffalo.	"
Tues.	" 8.	"	"
Wed.	" 9.	Sheridan.	"
Thur.	" 10.	Caubria.	"
Fri.	" 11.	" no show.	"
Sat.	" 12.	Crawford.	Nebr.
Sun.	" 13.	Sunday.	"
Mon.	" 14.	Douglas	Wyo.
Tues.	" 15.	"	"
Wed.	" 16.	Casper.	"
Thur.	" 17.	"	"
Fri.	" 18.	"	Nebr.
Sat.	" 19.	Harrison.	"
Sun.	" 20.	Sunday in Crawford.	"
Mon.	" 21.	Alliance.	"
Tues.	" 22.	" no show.	"
Wed.	" 23.	"	"
Thur.	" 24.	Chadron.	Si. Co.
Fri.	" 25.	Rapid City.	"
Sat.	" 26.	Hot. Springs.	"
Sun.	" 27.	Sunday.	"
Mon.	" 28.	Sturgis.	"
Tues.	" 29.	Belle Fourche.	"
Wed.	" 30.	"	"
Thur.	Jul. 1.	" no show.	"
Fri.	" 2.	Deadwood.	"
Sat.	" 3.	Lead.	"
Sun.	" 4.	Sunday.	"
Mon.	" 5.	Philip's celebration.	"
Tues.	" 6.	Pierre.	"
Wed.	" 7.	Blue M.	"

McQuitty kept his own neatly recorded routes during his years touring with circuses and other traveling entertainments.

Author's Collection



for example, advertised in the *Clipper* in August 1902, to lease, or preferably buy outright a railroad passenger car that could handle 25 people. He had saved some capital to invest.²²

The format and presentation adopted by most of the black vaudeville stand-alones—usually called “band and minstrel”—associated with white circuses was basically fixed after Lowery’s tenure with Forepaugh-Sells, so that from about 1899 to the end of McQuitty’s career in 1937, they were used in much the same manner. The band was a big feature of the daily street parade announcing the circus’s arrival and in the biggest shows had its own assigned bandwagon. While performing under the big top was a job reserved for the white bands, the black bands supported the vaudeville company as it presented a “minstrel show,” though the show itself retained few elements of its original namesake as it was developed in previous decades and popularized by white acts like Christy’s, Maguire’s, and the San Francisco Minstrels. The three part minstrel format, however, was maintained throughout most of the history of tented vaudeville, presented by traveling shows in the American South into the 1950s. Its individual components started out as a *first part* that presented the principal comedians with music as needed; an *olio*, or second part that featured singers, dancers, comedians, and specialty acts such as one might see at any vaudeville house; and an *after piece*, usually a short play which was often ad-libbed. Variations on content and how the shows were arranged abounded, but rarely would a circus minstrel show include much beyond the *olio*, as the sideshow performances generally ran less than an hour. As an *afterpiece*, shows like Lowery’s with Forepaugh-Sells might present a mini-concert for

A page from McQuitty's scrapbook.

Author's Collection

a grand finale. An orchestra, made up of the best bands-men, was the show's accompanists and also provided "in-
cidental music for the rest of the sideshow attractions and
struck up overtures between the acts."²³ Musicians who
could "double" as a specialty act found work more easily.

Circuses did more than give the black performers em-
ployment opportunities; they also gave black entrepreneurs
a blueprint for how to run their own shows. Black tented
vaudeville copied from the circus virtually everything
about how it was run, including mode of travel and routing;
respect for Sundays off; use of tented stages; variety of pro-
gramming; street parades, free concerts, and after-shows;
ballyhoo and hyperbolic advertisements; advance men and
the papering of towns; and glowing reports of on-the-road
successes reported back to the press. Arguments, claims,
and counter-claims about titles abound.

Because neither the *New York Clipper* nor *Billboard*
truly served the black performers' needs, weekly newspa-
pers like the Indianapolis *Freeman* first and then the Chi-
cago *Defender* provided two services: an essential "mail-
box" feature that allowed performers to receive mail at the
paper's office and also told where performers could receive
general delivery mail in upcoming weeks, and the regular
publication of routes. The biggest and best shows also had
a correspondent or two who regularly reported travel news
- about the shows and professional stars and also about the
social occasions to which they were treated and the general
social and economic conditions blacks enjoyed (or didn't)
in the communities where they performed. McQuitty, like
Lowery, was a regular correspondent for many of the shows
on which he played and likely the author of several more
news items than he's credited with.

The Indianapolis *Freeman* was the first important
chronicler of black show life. Editor and publisher George
Knox, born a slave in 1841, was a successful barber and
businessman before buying the struggling *Freeman* in 1892
and transforming it into a nationally circulated newspaper.
Without the *Freeman*, black entertainers would have had
a much harder time finding their stages and audiences.
Through most of the 1910s, it was the dominant black au-
dience newspaper because of Knox. The *Defender* gradually
usurped the *Freeman*'s position in some part because it was
published in Chicago, which flourished as a destination for
many blacks in the first years of the Great Migration out of
the South. Whereas George Knox thought the South rep-
resented blacks' greatest opportunity and opposed the Mi-
gration, the *Defender*'s founder and editor, Robert Abbott,
championed it. In the process, his paper came to be seen as

the more modern and progressive. Chicago, he and his pa-
per proclaimed, with its black business, arts and entertain-
ment culture, was a perfect destination for blacks wanting
to escape the South for a new life. As the *Defender* usurped
the *Freeman*'s influence, traveling entertainers shifted to it
for their reports, mail calls, and routings, and well into the
1930s it continued to report on the old-timers like McQuitty
from the traveling vaudeville world.

Billboard caught up to the game in late 1919, when it
began publishing J. A. "Billboard" Jackson's "Page," which
flourished during the first years of the Harlem Renaissance
and the Roaring Twenties. It was dropped in July 1925 "for
lack of black advertising."²⁴ Prior to Jackson's tenure and af-
ter it, news about black shows and performers in *Billboard*
is scarce.

With their counterparts, the tented vaudeville shows
that flourished during the first quarter of the twentieth cen-
tury, the circus annex bands' identities were for the most
part subsumed into those of their shows. To the white pub-
lic, they were a sideshow band with Ringling or Sparks. But
in black America, the annex bands were identified so com-
pletely with their black bandleader that they were more of-
ten than not referred to as such: Prof. Wolfscale's band with
Barnum and Bailey; Prof Lowery's band with Forepaugh-
Sells. It's not unusual to find reports from these bands that
don't even mention the circus to which they are attached.
("Prof" or "Professor" was an honorific given to most all of
the black bandleaders whether they were formally trained
or not.) However, with the stand-alones, the bands were
more often identified, as with circuses, with management
and the show's title, so that it wasn't A. D. King's band but
Silas Green from New Orleans; not William Blue's band,
but Richards and Pringle's Georgia Minstrels. Regardless of
whether the band was on a circus or part of a stand-alone,
the performers often followed their leaders around the cir-
cuit, not infrequently returning to shows for which they
had previously played because a familiar bandleader was
there and the circumstances were right. Shows employed
many of the same musicians on a rotating and revolving
basis, and for the most part, relations between the black
bands when they met on the road were cordial, often ad-
miring. When a show like one of Lowery's found itself in
opposition with one like Allen's New Orleans Minstrels or
Prof Marcus Veal's John Robinson Circus band, it was more
likely a cause of celebration, more like a reunion, than a
reason for concern. The entertainment columns in the *Fre-
eman*, *Defender*, and on Billboard Jackson's Page are filled
with accounts with these fortuitous encounters on the road

as well as with shout-outs from performers in one band to their cohorts in another, and almost always with good and cheery wishes for their success.

Despite their talents, virtually all of the early black bandsmen had to do something to their act to make it palatable to white audiences who wanted nothing to do with dignified and educated African American musicians playing classics. Lowery and his band seem exceptions: Watkins reports that his Forepaugh-Sells show was the first to eliminate blackface comedians, a practice that persisted through the 1950s on some shows although by then the makeup consisted of “putting on a lip.”²⁵ So they jazzed it up: around 1900, as the cakewalk craze faded, ragtime began with its “coon song” phase. As Abbott and Seroff have expertly explained, “coon songs” were basically the racially charged comic incarnation of ragtime, which they note “burst onto the scene during the season of 1897-98,” thereafter changing American popular music. Coon songs were not the black performers’ idea, even though some of the most popular were written by black stars such as Ernest Hogan and John Rucker. They were products of a time and an appetite by white Americans for this remaining vestige of old-time minstrelsy. But even as black performers sang “All Coons Look Alike to Me” in German, or “All Chinks Look Alike to Me,” or “All Colored Folks Look Like Little Black Gnats to Me,” or “White Folks, All Coons Don’t Look Alike to Me,” they were able to show off extraordinary musical and performing skills. And because playing it straight wasn’t acceptable, the black performers jazzed up their delivery and presentation even as they jazzed up the tunes. Along the way, musicians sometimes dressed in rags or as clowns, learned specialty routines, and played support to the plantation-style banter that was also a remnant of the old shows, for some, into the 1930s and beyond. After ragtime, came the beginning of jazz and race records, the Roaring Twenties and the Harlem Renaissance, and after that, their time was gone as recording made the traveling bands less necessary and the big shows and then movies dominated.

Continuing obstacles

McQuitty and other black vaudevillians had far more serious concerns and obstacles to success than their white counterparts. Race prejudice and segregation presented problems that whites knew little about, and within the circus world, the African American musician was further disadvantaged. The lack of public lodging accommodations for blacks made stay on a company’s sleeper essential, but most

black circus bands slept three-high—three bunks in a space where white performers would have two. The same held true of finding food; whereas whites could freely choose where to dine off-site, blacks rarely had that luxury. Many also had to double as canvas men or laborers. Lowery, for example, left Hagenbeck-Wallace for Richards and Pringle’s Georgia Minstrels after the 1914 season when circus management requested that his men “double canvas.” His insistence that musicians only be musicians was endorsed by other circus annex bandleaders, including Barnum and Bailey’s James Wolfscale, Ringling’s R. Roy Pope, and Gollmar Bros.’ James A. Harris.²⁶ Had Lowery’s “prestigious organization” been convinced to “double canvas, many other circuses surely would have followed suit.”²⁷

Blacks also remained segregated on the show and in the cookhouse of most larger circuses, second class citizens in a cast of circus, carnival and theatrical people considered “marginal at best in the eyes of [white] town people” wherever they played.²⁸ The best black circus bands, however, like the top theater and tented vaudeville shows, were treated like royalty in black communities wherever they went. Their arrival in town was eagerly anticipated and social events around their stay abounded. The black press reported frequently on these social events and the warm receptions afforded the traveling stars; performers like Lowery and McQuitty were usually the source of these reports, which were invariably laudatory. Their brief sketches offer an intriguing glimpse “behind the Veil” of all-night banquets and dances, sometimes with the entire sideshow, human oddities included, as special guests of honor.

“Behind the Veil” as used by W. E. B. Du Bois refers to the double consciousness that black Americans developed to accommodate their lives in a white-dominant world. This consciousness yielded a kind of doubling whereby one face was shown in white territory and another, the natural one, revealed only within black communities. Paul Laurence Dunbar’s 1896 poem sums it up succinctly: “We wear the mask that grins and lies; / It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes . . . / We sing, but oh the clay is vile / Beneath our feet, and long the mile; / But let the world dream otherwise / We wear the mask!”²⁹

Typical of the masking that characterizes much of black art is ragtime’s rise to prominence in the guise of coon songs after the popularity of Cole and Johnson’s 1898 hit play *A Trip to Coontown*, which touched off the ragtime craze. In 1900-1901 black stand-alones included the Honolulu Coon Company, the Country Coon Company, the Coon Hollow and Fogg’s Ferry Company, the Gay Coons from Dark-

ville, and the traveling theatrical productions, *A Holiday in Coonville*, *The Hottest Coon in Dixie*, *A Coontown Holiday*, and *Hustling Coon*. The outrageously offensive lyrics were an entertainment staple for several years, despite increasing protests from the black press and some of the singers who had to sing the lyrics; by the time the coon song lyric had fallen from favor, though, the music that accompanied these songs had taken firm hold. And once the music was loosed from the derogatory and inflammatory bondage of its lyrics, it would be free to evolve into jazz and blues. It's easy to imagine that had ragtime been introduced as concert hall music performed by a well-dressed and refined black man like Scott Joplin that it would not have fared so well as it did when a white man in blackface first sang "All Coons Look Alike." In essence, then, the music was hidden, in some ways "out of sight," so that not until the coon song lyrics would disappear from it could the music flourish on its own merits.

Among the many fascinating features of Abbott and Seroff's research is their exploration of linguistic histories related to music. They find "rag" in general use to describe popular dances several years before "ragtime" music appears. And they trace the origin of the 1960s phrase "out of sight" all the way back to lyrics being sung in the early 1890s.³⁰ W. E. B. Du Bois again is instructive, for he sees in white minstrelsy and coon songs the vestiges of the first truly African-American music, though in the mess of popular songs at the turn of the 19th century into the 20th, it's distinctly possible to get lost and "never find the real Negro melodies" where "the slave spoke to the world" a message that is "naturally veiled and half articulate."³¹ Words and music, he suggests in 1906, have lost each other. Nowhere were they further separated than in the lyrics to the coon songs that accompanied the new and lively music that became our first national musical obsession.

But players like McQuitty also lived "out of sight" for most of their lives—within a black community impossible for the white world to understand because it, too, existed "behind the Veil." Only blacks were able to see both sides of "the Veil"; whites would see *them*, however, only when they left the black world and ventured into the dominant white world. Whites, who lived outside the Veil, were unable to know "or dream the full power" of life behind it. Du Bois likens this dual existence for black Americans as being "like a wheel within a wheel."³² He finds in the black point of view a certain power in being able to move from within the Veil to outside it and in the resultant ability to see the radically different lives of those who thrived on both

sides, a sight that whites could not attain. Whites, outside the Veil, accommodated to a certain extent the intrusion of blacks into *their* world but because they never ventured behind the Veil, themselves, they had no clue as to the power and vitality that existed there. "Such a double life," writes Du Bois, "with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals."³³ Thus we get the dense and layered situation revealed in the plot of *A Trip to Coontown*, the black-cast play that launched the coon song craze that became rag time that became jazz and blues and virtually everything that's original in American music up through and beyond rap: the star plays a white man who's really a black man in whiteface who puts on blackface to play a black man. This scene and its unfolding situation would strike blacks and whites in the audience as funny, but for radically different reasons. The clownish blackface comedian has always struck black audiences in double ways: they can laugh at a staged caricature of how blacks are seen by whites, but also laugh at how blacks are seen by these same whites—who are laughing along with them—whenever they are publicly encountered, outside the Veil. Within the confines of the theater, it's safe to laugh at this depiction; outside the theater, outside the Veil, such laughter might be dangerous, an unacceptable sign of "uppitiness."

The circus world in some ways mimicked what Du Bois saw in the larger one. Blacks on sideshow bands are hardly ever noted in the white show business press, or even remembered. Circus posters never mention their sideshow bandleaders or the sideshows themselves; in some route books and publicity, the annex bandleader is named but his band is never listed. Sverre Braathen's 1971 history of "Circus Windjammers" makes no mention of black bands or musicians; his census that reports rosters of 1,015 circus bands comprised of "about 12,000 musicians" is a record of white bands only.³⁴ And when most people think of sideshows, they imagine the "annex of wonders" of "strange and curious people," not the black band or its vaudeville show, where blacks and curiosities inhabit a life behind a different kind of veil than what Du Bois notes, one in which they "can associate with others who have been deemed different or odd by society" and thus "form a common bond."³⁵ "The sideshow," one circus visitor writes in 1916, is "the amusement home of the poor and the colored people." He also notes sympathetically, "Our old friends of physical distinction were on hand . . . Some were attractive even under their physical disabilities." Lewis, Billy. "At Ringling Bros. Shows, Big Attractions Pulled from Every Direction." In-

dianapolis *Freeman* 20 May 1916.³⁶ But even the human curiosities warrant more notice in the *New York Clipper* and *Billboard* than the black annex bandsmen.

Black performers also faced one awful possibility that their white counterparts did not. Near the end of his two-year engagement with Forepaugh-Sells in 1900, McQuitty writes in his route book for September 18, at Ripley, Tennessee, "Citizens hanging a colored man today."³⁷ McQuitty played out that route, but for the next eight years his choice of work was with shows that avoided the South, traveling for the most part in the West and Midwest with Frank Mahara's Minstrel Carnival.

The first sentence in Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff's extraordinary 2002 book *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895* notes that between January 1889 and December 1895, over 1,000 African Americans were lynched in the United States.³⁸ A more recent study counts nearly 4,000 lynchings (at least 700 more than previously documented) of African Americans in the South between 1877 and 1950 and suggests that the Great Migration of blacks was more an escape from the rule of terror in the South than a search for economic advancement.³⁹ This is a horrific but essential lens through which to view the professional world in which McQuitty and his cohorts lived. No statistical survey, however, includes the near-lynchings like the one that W. C. Handy escaped in Texas, nor can it convey the horror of the actual event: Louis Wright, a 22-year-old trombonist since 1898 with Handy's own Mahara's Minstrels band but more recently with the Richards and Pringle's Georgia Minstrels, was taken by "a mob of masked men" from local authorities or given up by local authorities to the mob, depending on whether the event's narrative comes from white audience newspapers or black audience ones.

All reports agree that Wright was lynched; one says his tongue was cut out and his body shipped in a plain pine box to his mother in Chicago. Another says that in the run up to the lynching, a shooting during the show wounded trumpeter James H. Wilson, who was then left in jail unattended by a physician all night; he soon after left traveling shows for good and accepted a faculty position teaching band at Alabama A&M, replacing W. C. Handy. Richards and Pringle's had long been one of the very top black traveling stand-alone vaudeville shows. One of its bandsmen writes anonymously to the *Freeman* of "the most heinous crime that was ever perpetrated upon a traveling organization, and most especially an organization bearing the reputation this show has. We feel greatly humiliated and

embarrassed, and our reputation has gone forever. I do not think the state of Missouri can pay the damage it has done us." The Associated Press report of the event, which occurred at New Madrid, Missouri, on February 16, 1902, says that a fight broke out between one of the musicians and the blacks on stage; one of the blacks fired into the crowd, wounding several but none seriously. Black press accounts vary; one long report by an anonymous member of the band denies that Wright, or anyone on the show, had a gun, and asserts he was lynched for having "dared curse a white man." Handy writes that Wright, "an unusually talented musician" who "resented insult with every fiber of his being," had been walking to the theater with a young woman and was "snowballed by some white hoodlums. He retaliated swiftly, laying down a blast of curses." Later, when a mob came for Wright backstage, he chased them away with gunshots. They returned, according to Handy, with local lawmen and the entire troupe was jailed, where many were "brutally flogged during the questioning that followed" and Wright was eventually recognized.⁴⁰

The African-American "Band & Minstrel"

Abbott and Seroff also thoroughly document the incredible musical depth and variety that arise from the American South, despite the reign of terror its black residents—and visitors—are forced to endure. They manage to make sense of a seemingly incoherent line of entertainments that would ultimately culminate in what Forepaugh-Sells, Sells-Floto, Ringling Bros., Walter L. Main, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Howe's Great London, John Robinson, Sparks, Gollmar Bros., Cole Brothers Bros., Yankee Robinson, Downie Bros., the 101 Ranch and others would use so successfully in parades, free pre-show concerts, and as the highlight of their sideshows: the band and minstrel. The band was part of the daily street parade and rarely played under the big top. Within the annex, the African American company presented what was usually called a minstrel show, though it resembled such shows more in format than content. Abbott and Seroff call this "vaudevillized minstrelsy." Most such shows were stand-alones, hired to work under the white sideshow manager and along with the oddities and specialties that management arranged. The orchestra, smaller than the marching band and featuring the best musicians, played incidental music for the sideshow attractions and overtures between the acts. Select annex performers were sometimes part of an "after concert" in the big top. Although other blacks had led circus sideshow bands before him, Lowery popularized the new band and minstrel/vaudeville combi-

nation beginning with his first season with Forepaugh-Sells in 1899. Circuses subsequently got novel and exciting additions to their shows, hundreds of talented black entertainers found work, and in the years before radio and when record players were a luxury, ragtime, jazz, and blues found audiences in countless places where otherwise they might never have played. Because these musical treats were on the sideshows, they were welcomed by working class people in mass consumption and with much closer social contact between whites and blacks than outside the sideshow world. Inside it, the patrons were delighted by the same songs upper society folks were enjoying, thanks to the singers that brought them the latest hits via sheet music and talented musicians. Most of the white patrons who had paid more for the big top show missed out, then, on the transmission of this cultural news presented by an “extraordinary group of African American bandmasters” who were “Renaissance men” whose musical prowess was matched by managerial skills.⁴¹

Forepaugh-Sells 1899

McQuitty's first year with a circus was an eventful one: the 1899 season with the Forepaugh-Sells' annex band and minstrel show, which was organized and led by the esteemed P. G. Lowery, whose show was innovative and impressive. It emphasized “not only talent but also costuming, sets, and the environment” in which it was presented. Lowery, the *Freeman* notes, had a large stage, “nicely covered chairs, presenting a neat and attractive appearance.” Soon after, every company had “these attributes, and 14 white tents are giving work to big colored companies.”⁴² In essence, Lowery “modernized the sideshow presentation into a full-fledged after-show performance.”⁴³ Even the name for his show reinforced that his was a new concept: “P. G. Lowery's Concert Band and Vaudeville Company.” This re-branding, however, proved a futile attempt at erasing “minstrel” as a descriptive, as evidenced by the *Freeman*'s 1910 summary of show history that notes Lowery had established the “circus minstrels” as staples of the annex for several of the biggest circuses of the day. But it was certainly a different show from those early minstrels. Gone was the all-male performance with at least one person, known as “the wench,” performing in drag. Lowery's roster included a lady quartette and William Sherrah's Quartette, from Kansas City, Missouri, and an excellent band—as many as 14 pieces—that played all the latest hits and none of the plantation-style numbers associated with the old minstrel shows. More dramatically, Lowery's elimination of the use of blackface makeup by his

comedians put a new, more professional emphasis on the talents of his singers and exceptional specialty acts.⁴⁴

Prior to Lowery's Forepaugh-Sells show, most “colored departments” had consisted of a band of eight pieces at most, who performed seated like minstrel men in a semi-circle. Lowery's move to showcase his stars performing new and novel material, and his decision to present them just as they would have been presented in vaudeville ushered in a new era in African American entertainment. His first show with Forepaugh-Sells opened with a band of 12 musicians, six specialty acts, and stage manager Julius Glenn, who was also a cakewalk specialist.

Forepaugh-Sells' 1899 season was trumpeted with claims that it was actually three circuses in three rings, with 1,000 trained animals, 300 feature acts, 500 horses, and 1,000 people.⁴⁵ It opened memorably in New York for an 11-day run on April 18 at Madison Square Garden, where Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth had staged its spectacular openings each year since 1891. P. T. Barnum and his partners in the circus were the principal lessors of the open air Madison Square Garden that operated from 1879-1890. Barnum was also a partner in the syndicate—along with J. P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie—that built the 1890 Garden, which was designed by Stanford White. James A. Bailey and partners James E. Cooper, and briefly Barnum, had owned Forepaugh's show since 1890. For four years, 1899 to 1902, the James A. Bailey and partners-owned and managed Forepaugh-Sells would open the circus season with their Madison Square Garden spectacular, while Bailey's other interest, Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth, played Europe. Barnum and Bailey's had established the Madison Square Garden opening as the biggest circus opening yearly in 1881 (and in other New York structures from 1871-1880). Bailey was one of the principal investors in the second Garden's construction, completed in 1891.

McQuitty's route book differs from the Forepaugh-Sells published route by indicating that he joined Forepaugh-Sells on April 29 for the beginning of a week stand under canvas in Brooklyn. It is possible that Forepaugh-Sells could have closed Madison Square Garden after a matinee performance and made an evening one at Brooklyn under canvas—their official route book lists an April 29 show at New York—or that Lowery's band and minstrel could have opened at Brooklyn independent of Forepaugh-Sells, or that McQuitty simply has his dates wrong. His other notes indicate that Lowery's show did not begin work at least until then: On April 26, McQuitty writes of a visit

with “Lowery & gang” in Chicago, after which he left for New York, where on April 28 he visited Forepaugh-Sells at Madison Garden. After Brooklyn came a week in Philadelphia, and then more dates in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and New York before heading into New England and Canada. After two weeks in Canada, the show was back in New York and Pennsylvania, and then West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Illinois again, Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, then back through Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. After nearly three weeks in Kentucky, it went farther South, into Tennessee, Arkansas, Texas and Louisiana, where it closed on November 18 at Alexandria. In his route book, McQuitty makes only a few cryptic entries during his initial season with Forepaugh-Sells: On August 19 at Marshall, Missouri, “met T. J. here”; October 3 at Mattoon, Illinois, “man killed sec. 1”—a death on the first section of the circus train not noted in circus reports or in the one surviving local newspaper of the time.

McQuitty and several of his bandmates on Forepaugh-Sells had worked with Lowery as their band director prior to making the jump to join Forepaugh-Sells as a Lowery-managed stand-alone. The Original Nashville Students and P. T. Wright’s Grand Colored Concert Company played theaters and featured many performers who would work together on various shows over the next two decades, often with Lowery. In February 1898 they were featuring the skit “The Night before the Circus.”⁴⁶ Lowery left the Students to perform at the 1898 Trans-Mississippi Exposition in Omaha, where he furthered his reputation by outplaying W. C. Handy in a cutting competition. After the Expo closed, Lowery then led the band on the Georgia Up-to-Dates for a season. When he got the job to open with Forepaugh-Sells, he appears to have called together the best bandmen from that show and from those with whom he had worked so successfully with the Nashville Students, and in some reports his show would continue to use the Nashville Students name. Lowery himself was a graduate of the Boston Conservatory of Music; his bandmen had studied at Fisk University, Oberlin College, and the New England Conservatory, among other institutions known for excellence in teaching music—and for allowing African Americans access to that teaching. Those chosen for his band were among the best musicians in America, each capable of playing “difficult classical overtures, patriotic airs, and waltzes,” although with the circus annex, it was mostly ragtime and the newest and most popular tunes of the day. The 1899 season was Lowery’s first in a career-long pattern

that saw him leading circus bands during summer seasons and bands with black vaudeville shows during the winter.⁴⁷

Lowery writes a detailed summary of his show’s season on closing date, at Alexandria, Louisiana, November 18, the last of several reports he made to the *Freeman* during his first circus season. He starts his letter at 6:00 P.M., after the last performance, a matinee, while the “southern breezes are wafting far and near the sweet strains of ‘Home Sweet Home’ from the different bands of the Forepaugh-Sells Bros.’ Great Combined shows. I will take the pleasure in penning to the *Freeman* a few lines concerning my company with the above named shows, consisting of my band and vaudeville show.”

General Manager of the Forepaugh-Sells show was Charles Thompson. Stage manager Julius Glenn was also a cakewalk specialist. The cakewalk, Lowery notes, was “the crowning feature of the circus concert.”⁴⁸ The Sherrahs were fronted by their manager and basso William Sherrah. First tenor was William Johnson; second tenor, William Spencer; baritone, F. R. “Ace” Brooks. They were one of the most popular acts in the sideshow, “singing all the latest sentimental and coon songs of the day.” In the 1900 edition, they also appeared under the big top as part of the concert. Featured stars were the brother and sister act of Harry L. and Bessie Gillam, who also had been performing with P. T. Wright’s Nashville Students along with Lowery since 1896. Bessie Gillam would prove especially to be a star. From Detroit, she was one of the first African American women to specialize in ragtime coon song singing. Their father, Charles Gillam, was noted for his performances with local black string and brass bands, and their mother, Georgia E. Gillam, was a music graduate of Oberlin College and an excellent pianist. Lowery reports in October that “everything is lovely and the goose hangs high.” [In good weather, geese fly high.] Bessie Gillam, he adds, “still continues to please the public with her catchy style.” She is singing “with great success, ‘All I Want is My Black Baby Back’ (words and music by Gus Edwards and Tom Daley; recorded by Bob Alden, 1899) and ‘I’se a Picking My Company Now,’ an 1899 composition by Nathan Bivins. Harry Gillam, born in 1872, debuted at the age of 13 with Prof. E. M. Recter’s Juvenile Minstrels and was a feature with H. Edward George’s Operatic Minstrels before joining up with P. T. Wright. He later played on bands with McQuitty with Mahara’s Minstrels and Richards and Pringle’s Georgia Minstrels.⁴⁹ Other acts going over well, according to a Lowery report, included Tina Mizelle, “hitting them hard singing, ‘When You Ain’t Got No Money You Needn’t

Come Around.” Mrs. Nettie Lewis “is pleasing the large audiences that crowd around” the stage singing “The Best Little Girl in the Wide Wide World” and “I Can’t See Where You Get On.” Allie T. Gillam, meanwhile, was rehearsing “some very clever acrobatic feats with the famous Moulette family” from the big show.⁵⁰

The *Freeman*’s J. Harry Jackson reported in July on Lowery’s show after it played Indianapolis on July 19, calling it his “Famous Concert Band in conjunction with the Nashville Students,” who are “making a big hit wherever they appear.” Their shows are “new and novel to the patrons of the sawdust arena.” He adds that in Lowery’s company is a “very select company of ladies and gentlemen,” each a “star in their respective line,” and that this is “the first season for many of the company especially the ladies to appear under a tent.” In addition to Bessie and Allie Gillam, Mizelle, McQuitty, and William Mays, others listed in the company are Lula Stanley; Lowery, J. Jeff Smith, Edward Jones, F. C. Richardson, R. W. Wilson, James S. Morton, Robert Cooper, Joe Pleasant, Julius Glenn, and William Thomas.⁵¹

Personnel during the 1899 season varied. Comedian James White joined soon after the show left New York. As it traveled north to Montreal, drummer Skip Farrell and his wife, Edna King Farrell, a soubrette, joined; William May, tuba, joined at Indianapolis, replacing Joe Pleasant, who left in Indiana for Richards and Pringle’s Georgia Minstrels with stage manager/cakewalker Julius Glenn, who was also a drummer. Allie T. Gillam assumed stage management and cakewalking duties, and a Mr. Jones took over the orchestra after William Malone closed. C. W. Gossett, “a talented young trap drummer” joined at Wichita. At Kansas City, James Taylor, tenor soloist, and Thomas J. Lewis, solo cornetist, joined, along with Lewis’s wife, also a soubrette. Lewis had been a conductor of the Metropolitan concert band at Kansas City before joining Lowery’s; his band, Lowery wrote, “prepared a special banquet to my entire company, furnishing a splendid musicale, consisting of vocal, instrumental and a few selections” by his band. Also added after the season started were Mr. and Mrs. Prentis Oliver, coon song specialists.⁵²

White, also a coon songster, had been with P.T. Wright’s show as early as 1892 and he would leave Forepaugh-Sells with McQuitty after two seasons to go with the Guyer and West Minstrels, Abbott and Seroff note that Farrell was among the first to be proclaimed “king of trap,” and he challenged the profession to come test him: “any drummer in the world for any amount, backed by Forepaugh & Sells’ Bros . . . Now, come on or get back.” May, called in 1920 by

one critic “the best bass in the business,” was especially popular as a soloist: “His hard steady tone, technic, execution and phrasing has placed him as the peer of all bass soloists.” He and his brother, cornetist Thomas May, of Wichita, were with the Sells Bros. Circus annex band led by Solomon P. White as early as 1891, and they were in Lowery’s band with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Shows in 1907. Thomas May had charge of the Forepaugh-Sells annex band in 1910. William May was still playing tuba for Lowery when he made his last tour with the Cole Bros. Circus in 1951.⁵³

Lowery concludes his 1899 season summary with praise for his soubrettes and a list of the men who closed with his show whom he has so far not mentioned. He adds “a few personal remarks” for the “four ladies that close tonight with high standing: Miss Bessie Gillam, Tina Mizelle, Mrs. Prentis Oliver and Mrs. T. J. Lewis—their tidy dress, diligent work and noble conduct has won them much credit from the management.” The men he thanks are mostly bandsmen: Robert Wilson, James S. Morton, Robert Cooper, also known as “Dinktom,” and McQuitty, “better known as the ‘Black Prince.’”⁵⁴

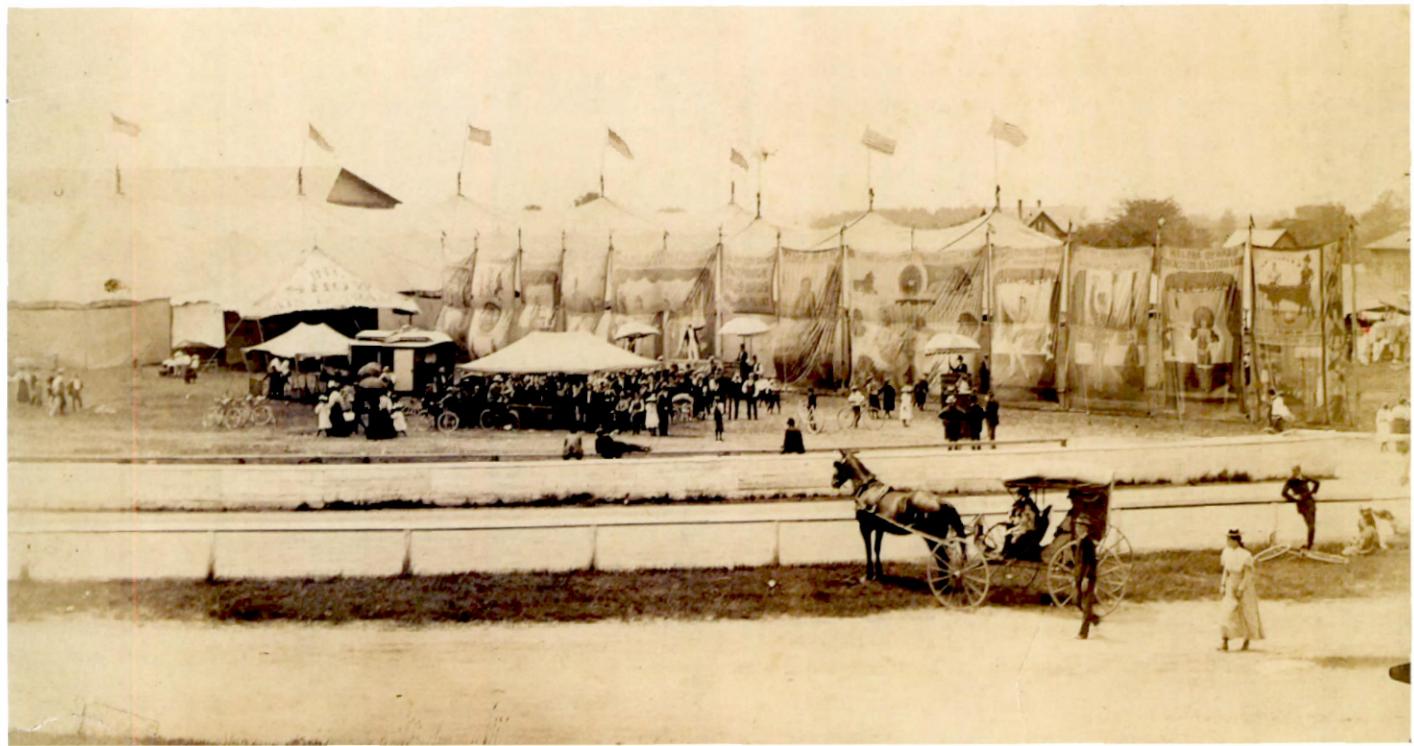
In an earlier report, Lowery writes glowingly of his first Forepaugh-Sells season, informing *Freeman* readers that it will close its “most successful season Nov. 18 in the history of the show.” His band and company have “proved such a success” that he will “put on the concert in the ‘big top’ next season.⁵⁵

At season’s end, McQuitty writes in his route book, “closed leave at night after big show for Kansas City,” where Lowery took most of his band and performers to open Lowery and Green’s Nashville Student Company. They would tour the Midwest playing theaters during the winter months of 1899-1900, until it was time to put together the Sells-Forepaugh show again in April, in New York.⁵⁶

Forepaugh-Sells 1900

The 1900 season with Lowery heading the Forepaugh-Sells band and vaudeville is a much better documented one thanks in part to the 16 detailed reports that Lowery sends to the *Freeman*. His show employed much the same players as had closed with Lowery and Green’s Nashville Students just prior to McQuitty’s joining Lowery’s bunch in New York on April 12—Forepaugh-Sells had opened in Madison Square Garden on April 4.

Lowery was proud of his band as well as the Forepaugh-Sells show. In his first report of the season to the *Freeman*, on April 23 at Baltimore, he names his entire company after noting, “The bugle was sounded to call to their respective



Above, the Forepaugh-Sells front lot in 1899.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

Below, performers from the 1899 Forepaugh-Sells Annex.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

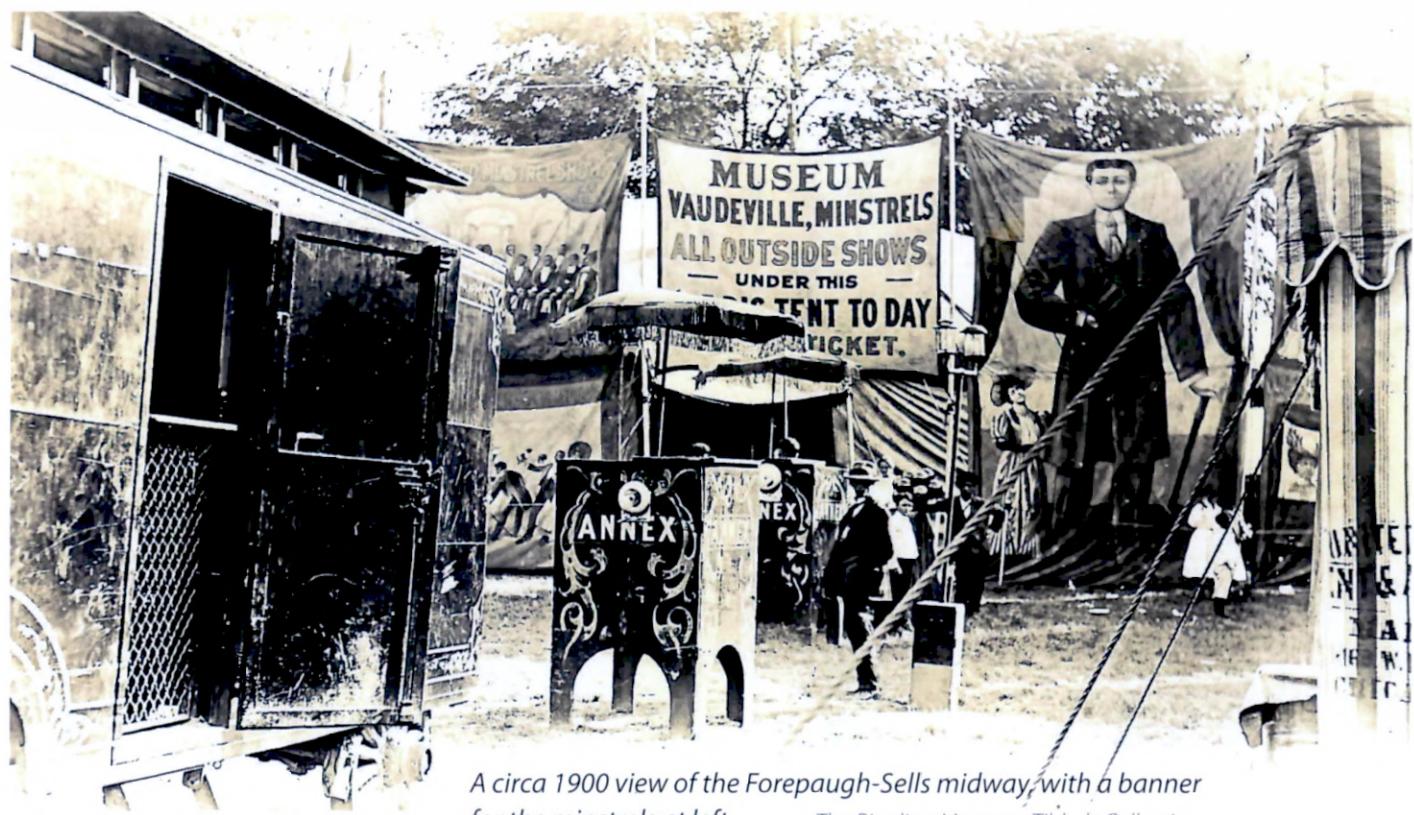




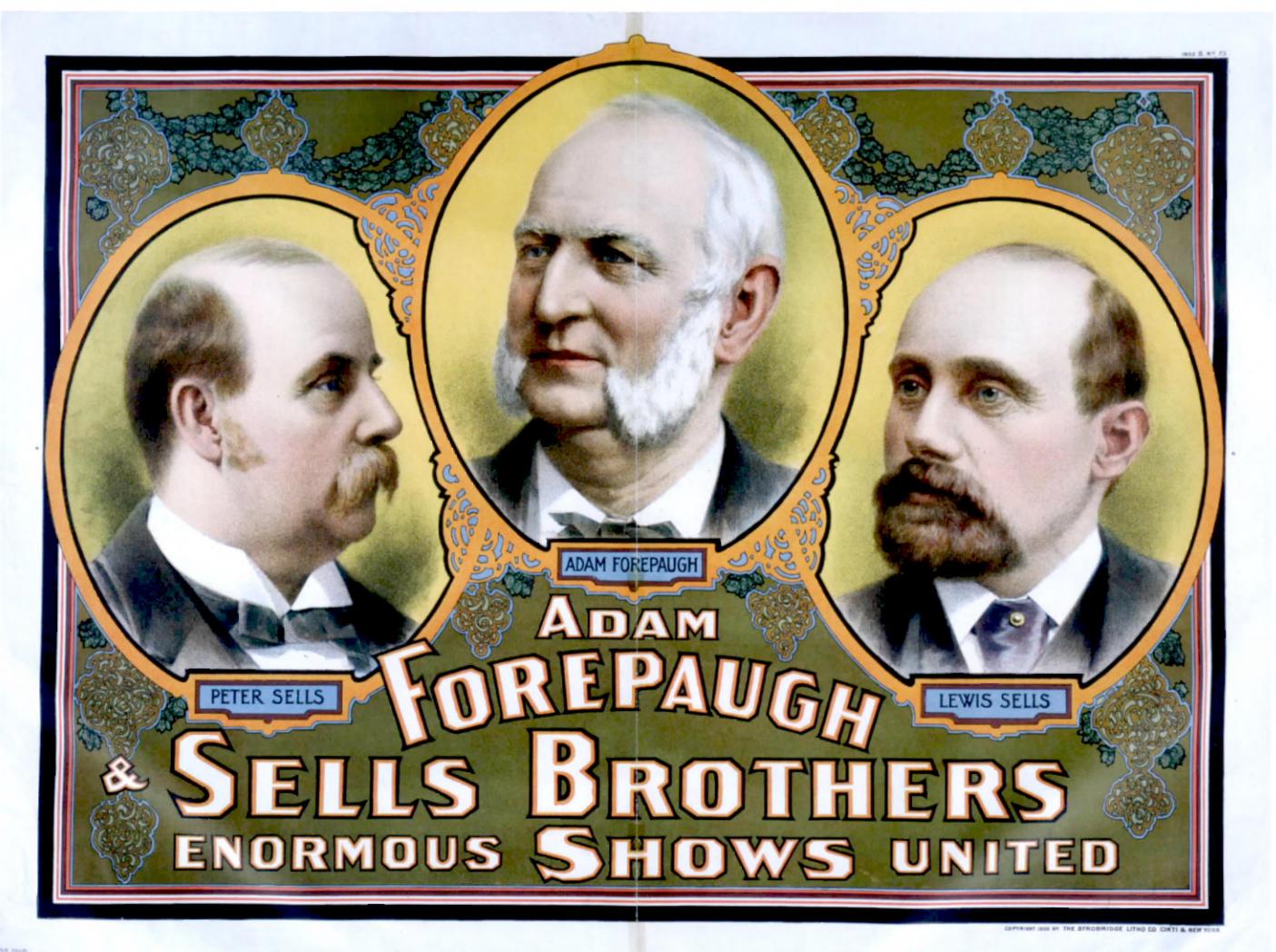
Two views of the Forepaugh-Sells midway, circa 1900. Notice the banner for Lowery at far right in the top photo.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection





A circa 1900 view of the Forepaugh-Sells midway, with a banner for the minstrels at left. The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection



A Strobridge poster printed in 1900.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

posts seven hundred people: performers, musicians and working men, the required host it takes to carry on the business with the greatest shows on earth. The sun shedding its rays of gladness on the new city of white and the brilliant glittering new parade uniforms make a display never before equaled in the city of Baltimore." Every department, he adds, is "much larger this year," and "one of the principal attractions of the parade" is his very own band of "selected musicians" which rides atop the largest bandwagon, "a brilliant blue trimmed in gold color" to match the band's "dark blue new uniform trimmed with gold braid." Described as "the special attraction of the sideshow," the band's evening concert continued to draw "large crowds" and do "large business" as it played Boston.⁵⁷

Lowery's band once again included McQuitty on euphonium; on cornets, Jeff J. Smith and T. J. Lewis; on clarinet, H. G. Brown and Mr. Black; on alto, Rob Wilson, Charles Clark, and Charles Elgar, who also played violin; on trombone, James Morton, Bob Cooper and Ed Heater; William May on tuba; A. T. Gillam, bass drum; and Skip Farrell, snare drum. Also featured were the Sherrah Quartette, with William Sherrah manager and bass; Ace Brooks, baritone; William Johnson, 1st tenor; and William Spencer, 2nd tenor.⁵⁸ Orchestra leader Elgar, from New Orleans and known on the show as "Frenchy," made several commercial recordings fronting his own orchestra in 1926.⁵⁹ The four ladies, who also performed as a quartette, were Mrs. T. J. Lewis, Mrs. Nora Heater, Mrs. Tina Gillam and Mrs. Edna King Farrell, "excellent singers and dancers" whose "original production of the Honolulu Dance" with Allie Gillam "is a hit everywhere."⁶⁰ The main loss for the new season

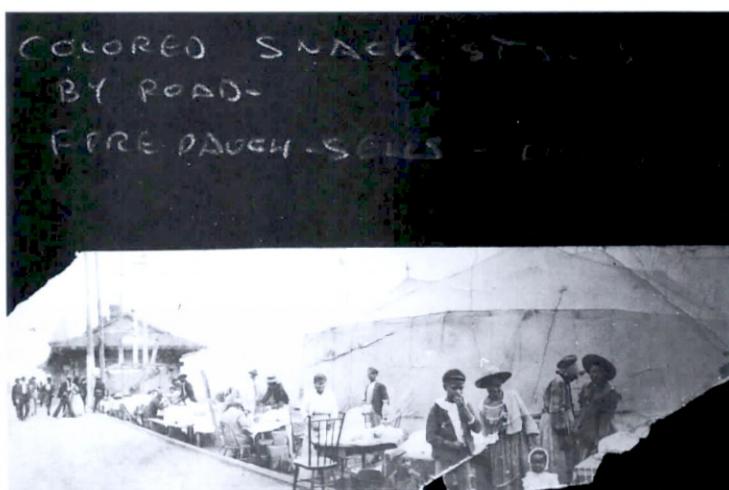
was Bessie Gillam, who had gone into vaudeville, playing in Chicago and other theaters on the black vaudeville circuit.⁶¹

The 1900 Forepaugh-Sells was "perhaps the largest show on tour in America." Its New York opening on April 4 was panned by the "yellow press" but "every performance at the Garden was packed," *Billboard* reported.⁶² After 18 show dates in New York, it embarked on a season with a significantly different route, adding 2-day stands in Baltimore and Washington D.C. and a week's stand in Boston, three cities that were skipped in 1899. Eliminated were all dates in Canada, Michigan and Texas and most of the previous season's show places in Oklahoma; added were new dates in states that were not played in 1899: Minnesota and the Dakotas, and in the south, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.

During the season, one elephant was strangled on April 23, 1900 in a futile attempt to get him to leave Madison Square Garden; a polar bear escaped at Boston but was "quickly returned to its cage," and a camel died at Fargo, N.D. The elephant, Dick, was "stuffed for exhibition purposes."⁶³

Notes in *Billboard* during the season document a May fight in New England between Ringling Bros. and the combined forces of Forepaugh-Sells and Buffalo Bill's Wild West, which were largely owned and routed by Bailey. By June, the fight was over. In July, they played only Fargo in North Dakota, on the 13th, in a single run that eliminated scheduled dates in Grand Forks and Wahpeton, North Dakota, because of severe draught. High winds at Fargo forced the show to be presented in the menagerie rather than the big top. On August 21 at Cameron, Mo., they suffered a blow-down with damage; several were injured and the shows cancelled. They had an amicable crossing with the John Robinson Circus at Memphis in September, and in October they avoided the big Georgia license fees by playing North Augusta, just over the state line in South Carolina, instead of Augusta, Georgia, as is listed on the show's official route; and instead of Columbus, Georgia, on October 29 as the route book states, they crossed the Chattahoochee River to play in Alabama. Finally, in December, Peter Sells bought back into the business, co-owning it then with James A. Bailey, W. W. Cole, and his brother, Lewis Sells.⁶⁴

During the 1900 season, songs were changed out frequently as Lowery and his singers worked to keep their offerings up to date with the latest tunes. Most of the songs listed below were popular hits from 1899 and 1900 com-



Even concessions were segregated as seen in this rare view of the snack stands for blacks set up for the 1907 Forepaugh-Sells circus.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

posed by white songwriting teams, and sheet music for many of them is readily available. Several were also recorded on cylinders that can be heard on the internet.⁶⁵

Nettie Lewis' repertoire included the Charles N. Daniels composition "You Tell Me Your Dreams and I'll Tell You Mine," which had been recorded by Etta Butler in 1899; the Charles B. Ward composition "I Ain't Got No Friends or Family Now"; and "My Little Zulu Babe," with music by Tim Brymn and lyrics by W. S. Eastren. Brymn, one of the best known African American composers of his day, led the 350th Regiment's Black Devil Orchestra of 70 musicians during World War I. Their performances in Europe—along with those of his contemporary, James Reese Europe, and his 369th Regiment Hellfighters—helped greatly to spread the new jazz form to French audiences especially.

Edna Farrell sang the popular coon songs "The Honolulu Dance," the Harry Von Tilzer composition "I Wouldn't Leave My Home If I Were You"; "My Baby Gal"; and "Sing Me a Song of the South," composed by Joseph Natus.

The Sherrahs sang Gussie Davis' hit from 1899, the ballad "Sweet Norine"; "Little Georgia Rose," with words by Robert F. Roden and music by Max S. Witt, which was recorded by Jere Mahoney in 1898; and "My Lady Lu," with words by Charles W. Doty and music by Edwin S. Brill. Gussie Davis, one of the most prolific of African American songwriters, died in 1899 at age 26; he published more than 300 songs.

Ed Heater sang Nathan Bivins and Carroll Johnson's composition "Warm Baby from the South" and "I Ain't Got No Time To Be Your baby."

Tina Gillam sang "Just Because She Made Dem Goo Goo Eyes," with lyrics by John Queen, music by Hughie Cannon, a song about a black minstrel man who gets fired after being distracted by "a nice black gal in the very front row"; and "Every Race Has a Flag But the Coon," by Will A. Heelan and J. Fred Helf, which was one of the biggest hits from 1900-1901 and was recorded by over a hundred artists. Helf, also a music publisher, composed over a hundred songs.

Allie Gillam sang two songs by black composers, Ernest Hogan's "The Congregation Will Please Keep Their Seats" and Bert Williams and George Walker's "If You Love Your Baby Make the Goo Goo Eyes." It was Hogan's 1896 composition "All Coons Look Alike to Me" that had launched the coon song mania. Williams and Walker, first billed as "two real coons" in vaudeville, became the two most famous black actors of the early 20th century. Walker started his career with the Lemen Bros. Circus.⁶⁶ Williams and

Walker became sensations when they starred in *In Dahomy* (1902), which was the first Broadway production written by blacks; and then in two other Broadway hits, *Abyssinia* (1906) and *Bandanna Land* (1907). Walker died in 1909. Williams, called by W. C Fields "the funniest man I ever saw and the saddest man I ever knew," was a star with the Ziegfeld Follies for most of the 1910s.⁶⁷

Lowery and his band were frequently entertained by locals as they traveled, and he also often noted visitors to the show. In New York City, Pet Washington and Bob Slater "spared no pains in making the Professor's visit an event of long remembered pleasure."⁶⁸ At Boston, where again "the goose hangs high," Lowery had "lots of visitors at the circus meeting lots of his school mates and friends"—he was an 1897 graduate of the Boston Conservatory of Music. He and J. J. Smith were entertained by the Henry Dawson family at their residence.⁶⁹ At Anderson, Indiana, "Kid Roberson, the well-known light-weight boxer" and the *Freeman's* business manager, Elwood Knox, were entertained by the company. "The Stage" column notes that Lowery "has surrounded himself with a company of artists who are making a reputation for themselves in the profession" and thanks Charles Thompson, "genial manager of the 'big show'" for "the many courtesies extended" to Roberson and Knox, who was the son of *Freeman's* founder-editor George L. Knox; Elwood Knox would also succeed his father as editor.⁷⁰

At Buffalo, Bert Williams and George Walker "spent a very pleasant evening with us," and in Cleveland, the show met C. W. Harris, cornetist and "one of America's senior minstrels." At Oskaloosa, C. L. Barnhouse, a prominent bandleader and music publisher, especially of circus music, presented the band with "some of his own compositions which our band played for him and family while they waited." At Centerville, Iowa, George Landers, director of the 51st National Guard band, presented the show with "some of the very latest music, while after the show we were all invited to his residence where a pleasant time was had." At Muscatine, Iowa on June 28, the band was "tendered a royal reception and banquet" at Cal Towers' home. Towers, for a "number of years" prominent "in the circus business," arranged an evening's entertainment that included a dinner table "spread with all the delicacies of the season, which were too numerous to mention." The program began with selections by the band followed by songs from its quartette; a song performed by the local mandolin club, and then supper. After it, the band played an overture, Ace Brooks and the Sherrahs sang Williams and Walker's "The Medi-

cine Man," and the show was closed with another number by the mandolin club.⁷¹

Lowery's former band and show, the Georgia Up-to-Dates, visited the lots on July 14 at Grand Forks, North Dakota, where all were "shown a grand time and made many friends around the city of white. The Georgias were very interested in many different sights to be seen in circus life while every eye was stretched for excitement." Some of the Georgias saw the big top show, and "another part only cared to see the 'gigwauks.'" One bandsman sent regards to all his old circus pals: "hit the drum' (boom!) curtain."⁷²

At Omaha, the band was served a "banquet and ball" on Sunday, July 30, by the Tuxedo Club, managed by John Bell, "one of the grandest times of the season. . . an entertainment long to be remembered as it was one for the showmen (bar none)." The ball went on until 4:00 A.M. "when every dancer was worried and tired out and the orchestra played the strains of *Home, Sweet, Home*, and the orchestra played the *Star Spangled Banner* to conclude the night, a swell thing."⁷³

At Jefferson City, Missouri, on August 29, the show was visited by Mahara's Minstrels, one of McQuitty's former and also future employers. The Maharas were disappointed when the parade was canceled because of heat: "our manager did not think it much use in us scorching in the sun like others do." It was here that Skip Farrell challenged "any drummer in the world for any amount" with whatever bet is settled upon backed by Forepaugh-Sells.⁷⁴ At Belleville, Illinois, Ella Dorsey, one of the dancers with Lowery's 1899 show, visited, along with her sister, and her "late dance" was declared "a winner, and her work in contortion surprises the world." She and her brother, James, were busy "putting on a double turn that stands without imitation."⁷⁵

In September, Lowery reports that all are "well and enjoying the very best of everything under the city of white." George Chandler of the Melroy-Chandler Minstrels visited the show at Hutchinson, Kansas, where Lowery "spared no pains to show him a pleasant time." Chandler reported to the *Freeman* that "all of the boys looked fine and seemed to have gained from ten to fifteen pounds. The girls are all looking well and happy, enjoying the success of a well organized and good managed show." The women, he adds, have "organized a drawing room circle for mutual benefit and improvement." The music "that ascends from the glorious circle would do your heart good to hear." He says that the band showed off its instruments "with pride": Lowery's \$125 horn, Elgar's \$80 alto, McQuitty's "new four-valve Boston musical euphonium."⁷⁶

At Memphis on September 16, the entire show was entertained by the Young Men's band, an event that was "one of the best ever witnessed by the four big bands of the 'big trick.'" Everyone gathered at the band room on Beale Street at 9:00 A.M. and paraded to the Jackson Mound Park, headed by Lowery's concert band, which was followed by the Greenville, Mississippi band and then the Young Men's band of Memphis, which was a "treat to the circus bands and visiting band." The "white circus band met us at the gates of the park and a rousing musical time was spent by the big bands." They had all been expecting to welcome Rusco & Holland's Georgia Minstrels big band, but their arrival in Memphis had been delayed.⁷⁷

No mention is made in *Billboard* or the *New York Clipper*, however, of the lynching McQuitty notes upon the show's visit to Ripley, Tennessee. The victim, Henderson House, had been accused of murdering a white man. Already earlier that year at Ripley, a local physician, Louis Rice, had been lynched for testifying on House's behalf, and two brothers, Henry and Robert Giveney, had been lynched for other causes. Ripley is just 12 miles from the site of the infamous Fort Pillow Massacre during the Civil War, in which Confederates led by Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest slaughtered as many as 350 black Union soldiers attempting to surrender. At least 10 African-Americans were lynched in the county between 1898 and 1904.⁷⁸

After Forepaugh-Sells closed at Aberdeen, Mississippi, on November 3, 1900, stage manager George V. Connors wrote an open letter to Lowery that was published in the *Freeman*, thanking him for his service and wishing him and his bandmen all "such good fortune next year." He recalls in his letter the stars they entertained—Bert Williams and George Walker and the Mallory Brothers among others—and compliments the local hosts for the receptions they were given in Boston, Omaha, Muscatine, Iowa, and "other places too numerous to mention." He also praises Lowery: "The best evidence of your leadership is the fact that during the season closing, that has run 28 weeks, there has been no change whatever, which is in itself a gilt edge record for you."⁷⁹

Lowery and his show, including McQuitty, left the day after closing with Forepaugh-Sells to join Swain's Nashville Students in Chicago, where they were entertained by Prof Henderson Smith and "the well-known entertainer and comedian Thomas McIntosh" after "an incomparable supper and wine was served." Lowery then "favored the audience with several duets on the Distin and [Boston] Three Star cornets."⁸⁰

Sparks 1915

After closing with Forepaugh-Sells in November 1900, McQuitty once again played the winter season with Lowery and much of his gang, working the Midwest for the most part under canvas, with W. I. Swain's Original Nashville Students "in nightly unison with P. G. Lowery's Famous Concert band." When Lowery returned to Forepaugh-Sells in April 1901, McQuitty stayed on with Swain's until being "layed off in Kansas City," he notes in his route book on June 1. Soon thereafter he joined Johnson and Stater's Big Minstrel Carnival, who boasted that they traveled in their own railroad cars with a cast of 40; Fountain Wood was their band director.⁸¹

Within a year, McQuitty would join Frank Mahara's Minstrel Carnival, whose band was led by W. C. Handy, for a 5-year run. Lowery was also Forepaugh-Sells' annex bandleader in 1902; in 1903, he was stranded in Janesville, Wisconsin, when the Luella Forepaugh-Fish Wild West closed suddenly. In 1904, he was back with Forepaugh-Sells, and in 1905 he led the sideshow band for the Great Wallace Circus Shows. For part of February 1905, after Handy had left Mahara's, Lowery was engaged to lead one of Mahara's two bands; by April Lowery and his band had returned to the Great Wallace Circus Shows for its opening in Peru, Indiana on the 19th. Lowery's incredible 50+ years in circuses included work leading annex bands with Forepaugh-Sells, Great Wallace, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, Cole Brothers Bros., and Downie Bros.

Between 1900 and his next circus job, with Sparks in 1915, McQuitty continued to work with many of the same players he had started with. He played long stretches with Frank Mahara's Minstrel Carnival (August 1902-March 1907; April 1909-April 1910); the Dandy Dixie Minstrels (May 1907-March 1909), and Allen's Minstrels (July 1912-February 1915, and shorter ones with the Billy Kersands Minstrels (April-July 1910) and several other shows. He also had extended engagements at theaters in Jacksonville, Florida and Kansas City, Missouri, where he worked for several months at the Armour Packing Company, first with the "hay gang" and then in "sheep beds," as he notes in his route book.

McQuitty is likely the author of several reports to the *Freeman* on Mahara's, and he makes clear the kind of show he's on: "Out of 25 people we have not one who can be called a 'booze fighter,' and our stage manager, Skinner Harris, has made rules against all swearing. . . . If all colored minstrel companies are as well behaved as the Mahara boys then they are far above the average white company."⁸²

When McQuitty returned to circus life, he was part of a mass exodus from Allen's Minstrels band. He had played with Allen's for nearly two-and-a-half years, when he notes in his route book on March 19, 1915, "No show as 14 people left at once, leaving 4 in car." What played out in the pages of the *Freeman* was far from an amicable split, with McQuitty firing the first volley, disputing a report as to why the show had closed: "Allen's Minstrels did not close on account of bad business as the show was making money, but Allen and wife would not let any of the money loose so the boys packed up and left." He signed his note "M. McQuitty, a man who don't believe in knocks—just a warning to my friends."⁸³

Allen addressed the situation, in which his band had left "without a moment's notice," in the same April 10, 1915 issue of the *Freeman* and explains that all had agreed to work the winter season under tent for half-pay, that he had lost about \$1,000 during that time, and that the band had left when spring arrived, without notice, as soon as other shows started hiring, which meant they also forfeited their back pay.⁸⁴

Charlie Rue, with Allen's for the past decade, remained after the others left and as Allen built another band for a new season, but Rue still publicly sided with McQuitty and the others in a subsequent report to the *Freeman*: "I advanced money to Mr. Allen to pay bills. When the show began making money he never appreciated the former favors. He forgot friends; people began leaving. A. G. Allen is a number one advance man but no manager so musicians and performers look out."⁸⁵

Sparks' annex band was led by Arthur A. Wright, who had worked as stage manager and played cornet for P. T. Wright's Nashville Students in 1912 and as stage manager and solo cornet player for P. G. Lowery's annex minstrels with Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1913. Wright led the annex band on Al G. Barnes in 1923; his last circus band was with Ringling Bros. and Barnum in 1948.

McQuitty reported on the Sparks annex show to the *Freeman* frequently and he clearly liked working for Wright, who "has fine quarters for his band and show, I dare say the best of any show on the road, as Mr. Sparks fixed up the end of his last year's sleeper for the colored band and we are all proud of the same. We have six double berths and eleven people; a nice wash room and clothes closet and a vestibule and sleeper."⁸⁶ The accommodations remained segregated.

His first post to the *Freeman* from Sparks, McQuitty writes: "After fourteen years out of the circus business, this season, 1915, finds me back under the white tops, riding

one of the wagons in parade. Our season [opened] at Salisbury, N.C. the present winter quarters of the show . . . Our band, under the leadership of Prof. A. A. Wright, was called to Salisbury on April 5th, so we were in good shape for the opening date April 12th. Long before time for the parade, the streets were crowded and at 12:30 our monster parade left the grounds and it was a grand affair. The local lodge of Elks headed the parade. Our business was immense that day as the weather was just fine for the occasion. After one week out we are spending Sunday in Princeton, a nice little town in Virginia hills, and everything around the show running as smoothly as if it was near the close of the season. The members are all well at this writing.⁸⁷

Among the familiar faces McQuitty found on the Sparks show were drummers Sam Kennedy and Rastus Airship, trombone player James McDonald, baritone and conversationalist William Bryant, and actor Henry Wilds (who went by his middle name, Isaiah, in the band), all of whom had played with him on the Forepaugh-Sells annex. McQuitty worked two seasons with Sparks, sandwiched around a winter with the original Georgia Minstrels, with whom he would play again for the 1925-26 season. Airship, whose real name was Edmond Madison, had charge of the Sparks annex band in 1923.⁸⁸

For the 1915 season, Sparks had "the entire train painted a bright yellow, with trimmings of red and gold" and the show was "unusually strong in animal acts this season."⁸⁹ The wagons were red with yellow undergears. The first thing "to catch my eye," wrote one reporter who visited the show, "was the Sparks Show train of fourteen cars, consisting of four coaches, four stocks, and six flats, all in yellow, with the name Sparks' World Famous Shows' in blue . . . Although not as large as some parades I have seen this season, a neater one I never had the pleasure of looking upon in my life."⁹⁰

The big show band for 1915, led by Jack Phillips, was "one of the very best small bands I have ever heard," wrote one visitor.⁹¹ It featured the new march "Sparks Triumphal," written by former Sparks bandsman Harry Hughes and dedicated to manager Charles Sparks. By February, Fritz Brunner had "his four lions working daily, and already has them playing see-saw and making pyramids."⁹² Walter E. Young and his brother were in their third season as "the principal and producing clowns," with a new three act, with plenty of comedy and bumps.⁹³

Wright's African-American band showcased several songs by William "King" Phillips, including his new hits "Eagle Rock" and "High Ball Rag." When the Georgia Min-

strels' trombone player Horace Harrison proclaimed in the *Freeman* that he was the best at playing Phillips' "Florida Blues," McQuitty's gentle response was indicative of the mutual respect he and his peers attempted to foster, in lieu of bragging and tearing others down: "Now, this fellow [Harrison] must remember that there are people playing 'The Florida Blues' and getting all there is in it, also there are some devils that he has not met lately."⁹⁴

McQuitty assured the *Freeman* readers that the Sparks sideshow was "one of the best under canvas this season." Wright's minstrels opened the program, followed by Berta Wren, lady bag puncher, mind reading and palmistry; Millie Dick, "snake enchantress"; James Harte, magician; Ray Dick, "Punch and Judy"; and Mable Buel's "trunk mystery."⁹⁵ James Hanson sang "Barnyard Bamboree" and "Little Rastus Airship is cleaning with his dancing."⁹⁶ Abbott and Seroff write that the 5-piece orchestra derived from Wright's 9-piece concert band "suggests an emergent jazz band." In that innovative band, McQuitty played bass; McDonald, trombone; Wilds, traps; Gray, cornet, and Bob Oliver, clarinet.⁹⁷

Before the show opened on April 12 at Salisbury, North Carolina, it had already suffered a blow down, when part of its canvas was torn and a section of seats damaged during a storm on April 2, two days after McQuitty had arrived in town for practice.⁹⁸ The show's second week out found them "still in West Virginia. Elkins is a very pretty little place to spend Sunday. We got in about 8:30 this morning and 10 o'clock our tents were up and breakfast over and the boys had a chance to stroll about. We are having some fine weather. We had slight showers in Beckley, Hinton and Marlinton, but not enough to hurt our attendance very much. Our show is moving northward fast and the next two weeks will find us in Ohio and Indiana."⁹⁹

He next reported the show was "still doing nicely through Ohio. Nice weather is still with us. I wish to let the lady folks know that Jas. Ransome will soon be in the matrimonial field, as we showed a town last week and our lot was filled with clothes pins. So Ransome got busy and collected enough to hang up an ordinary washing. So girls, look out for his ad soon. Jas. McDonald says hello to Jas. Wolfscale and boys with Barnum's show. Isaiah Wells, our trombone player, has undergone a successful operation, vis.: three visits daily to Spark's mess tent, and would like to meet all comers at 158 pounds in the show business." He also heaped praise on Rastus Airship's act, pronouncing him "the best ever," adding that he "looks the part now in long pants."¹⁰⁰



Above the Sparks midway in 1915 with a minstrel group performing on the stage.

Below, a ticket wagon on the Sparks lot in 1916.

Photos from the Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection





From Minot, North Dakota McQuitty writes of "having bright weather" and the fun of spending "a very pleasant Sunday visiting Richards and Pringle Minstrels, as they played Minot Saturday and laid over until about 4:00 A.M. Monday. Some visit we boys had. Speaking of we boys, I mean boys like Jerry Mills, P. G. Lowery, Clarence Powell, Jno. A. Watts, Ed Tolliver, Albert Fredericks, and Little Manzie Campbell, Bob Oliver, A.A. Wright. Some boys, believe me. I hope to meet all the boys again someday."¹⁰¹

In late July, they were in Wisconsin: "Everyone about the show enjoys the lakes. Boating, fishing and swimming are the principal sports. Mr. Arthur Wright's band is given up to [be] the best circus band on the road."¹⁰² But in Valley City, "a nice little town to spend Sunday," a late evening storm "came up which sent everybody to the cars. Luckily we were placed near the tents so the menagerie and stock were loaded so no damage was done them. This is the storm season up this way so we are on the lookout for such at any time. . . . Mr. Robt. Oliver is very much pleased with his new B-flat clarinet he received yesterday from C. G. Conn."¹⁰³

Sunday, September 12 finds the band "spending a very hot day in Clarksville [Tennessee] with plenty of visitors on the lot. We are having our summer at last as the past few days run us out of our coats for the first time this season. . . Mr. William Oliver and wife, also Chas. Oliver spent Monday with us visiting the show at Marion [Illinois]. In the evening Mr. Chas. Oliver entertained the Wrights band with a very nice concert on the piano. Chas. Oliver being one of the best piano players of our race. The boys of Wright's band all wish him much success at his music. The boys wish all troupers success."¹⁰⁴

From North Carolina, McQuitty reports "a very pleasant Sunday in Tarboro, October 31st. Smith's Greater Shows came in for a week's engagement and the fair starts here tomorrow so there is great crowds in town now. Mr. McQuitty just received a new bass from Keefer Co., and sent the beat bass on the road in to have some repairs made on it. Get in line and play a yank. We spent a very pleasant Saturday last in Greenville, N.C. with O'Brien's Georgia Minstrels No 2. The boys all came out to the grounds and attended the show and pronounced it No.1. We will spend next Saturday with the same show in Mt. Olive, N.C. Best wishes to the Georgias."¹⁰⁵ And from Mt. Olive, he reports, "We are having some very fine weather and business continues good." Of catching up with O'Brien's show again: "We had a great time visiting. We had a chance to see the entire performance of the minstrels and must say that Col. O'Brien is doing a great thing for the colored profession."¹⁰⁶

Two incidents speak to how the Sparks show looked out for

An Erie Litho poster used to advertise the Sparks show.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

others, no doubt keenly aware of how perilous it might be to be black and stranded in the South. While the show played near Helen, Georgia, it came to bandmaster Wright's attention that a player with the Nashville Amusement Company, Babe Steel, had been in jail for two weeks, in lieu of a small fine. McQuitty reported that it took Wright but "five or ten minutes" to raise the required cash.¹⁰⁷ At Salisbury, North Carolina, the show received R. O. Henderson of Kansas City in answer to an ad for a player, but "he could hardly get around on account of sickness." Sparks determined he was too ill to travel and put him back on the train "with a ticket and money enough to go back to Kansas City. Too much praise cannot be spoken of this act of kindness on the part of Mr. Chas. Sparks. Many managers would have let the man out without that consideration."¹⁰⁸ According to McQuitty's route book, Henderson made it to the show's second date, a few miles away at High Point, before he was put on the train for Kansas City.

His final report from Sparks corrects the closing date: "We are now nearing the end of our season as we will close at Cochran, [Georgia], on December 6, making a season of thirty-four weeks. A nice long season and it has been a pleasant one for everybody. Mr. Arthur A. Wright is very much pleased with the band he has had this summer, as they gained the reputation of being the best colored band ever around."¹⁰⁹

Sparks 1916

After Sparks closed, McQuitty took a new job with Richards and Pringle's Georgia Minstrels, the oldest and grandest of the black traveling vaudeville shows. He left Georgia at 12:45 A.M. on December 7 and was routed via Atlanta, Mobile, New Orleans, Houston, San Antonio, and El Paso before arriving in Tucumcari, New Mexico, where he caught up with his new show, whose bandleader was P. G. Lowery, on hiatus from Hagenbeck-Wallace for a season. Their correspondent wrote to the *Freeman*: "Moses McQuitty joined last week, and as a musician, Mr. McQuitty is par excellence, and quite an addition to Prof. Lowery's already big band."¹¹⁰ After a western U.S. tour with the Georgias, he was back in Salisbury, North Carolina on April 7, 1916, and rehearsing there for another season with Arthur A. Wright's band with Charlie Sparks.

A. A. Wright's band for the 1916 season was basically the same as it had been for 1915, but it added a new vocalist, Viola McCoy, who sang the comic "Scaddle-de-Mooch," written by Cecil Mack, and "Daddy," which may have been an early version of the blues song "Oh Daddy," recorded

in 1921 by Ethel Waters and in 1922 by Bessie Smith. If McCoy's biography has her birthdate right, she was but 16 when she joined Wright's band. Once she moved to New York in the 1920s, she became one of the best known of the early classic blues singers, recording nearly 60 sides for Vocalion, Columbia, Gennett and other labels between 1923 and 1927. Several of these were recorded with Fletcher Henderson's Jazz Five. Ida Cox, another future blues star, was at the time still being billed as a "coon shouter."¹¹¹ But by the mid-1910s, it was blues that had become the "special attraction that sustained the popularity of African American entertainers under the sideshow tent."¹¹²

McCoy is listed in the official route book roster as one of two soubrettes. Cleo Poteet, the other, had toured the 1915 season with Alexander Tolliver's Big Show featuring yet another future blues star, Ma Rainey.¹¹³ With Wright's show in 1916, Poteet sang "Dancing the Jelly Roll" and "Abba Dabba Honey Moon," which were hit songs for Collins and Harlan in 1915 and 1914 respectively.

During the 1916 season, reports from Wright's band were rare in the *Freeman*. A brief note after they had "just finished our third week on the road" reported "everything is running smooth" and listed the band roster, again with several players from the previous season. Others listed with the show included Will Taylor, the one-man band with the pit show; Fat Conners, "boss canvas man in sideshow"; Rube Walters; Leroy Smith, head porter, and his staff: Frank Thirdgill, car 3; Steven Crump, car 9, Zeke Davis, car 10; and Eugene Peterson, cafe car.¹¹⁴

In Tennessee, the show did "a very nice business, but quite a bit of malaria around the show. Last Thursday we played Gallatin [Tennessee], the home of William Hayner Bryant, our baritone player, and after the show the entire sideshow was invited to his home for refreshments and must say he lived up to the name of 'Hayner' in full as he sent every one home stepping high, and some of them were not over it the next day. Everyone had an enjoyable time. The entire bunch wishes the entire profession well."¹¹⁵

Another McQuitty note begins to sum up the end of this route: "Sparks show will close a very pleasant season of 33 weeks at Concord, North Carolina, on November 25th. The show has made all the New England states this season and has had a very eventful season so far. We have had two wrecks in the last two weeks, but nothing serious, as no one was hurt. Only the baggage wagons was injured. The people are all looking forward to the winter and different jobs. Mose McQuitty wants his friends to know his address. It will be 3904 Olive Street, West Philadelphia [Pennsylvania]."

nia]. A. A. Wright and band wish the entire show world success.”¹¹⁶

The *Freeman* continued all 1916 season to publish frequent reports from Wolfscale’s band with Barnum and Bailey, L. K. Baker’s with the 101 Ranch Wild West, and with the Gollmar Bros., J. A. Harris’s band and minstrel who were featuring Elmer Scott singing “Circus Day in Dixie,” recorded in 1916 by the Versatile Four, an African-American string band from New York.¹¹⁷

McQuitty’s route book adds few details to what is known about Sparks’ 1915 and 1916 seasons. During rehearsal for the 1915 season, he stayed at 225 E. Fisher St., a property redeveloped in 1929, in Salisbury. He notes the sending of Bob Henderson home and that they gave only one show at Hillsboro, North Dakota. Two changes not reflected in the official Sparks route book: no show at Palatine, Illinois, “acct quarantine” and a show added the next day, August 29, at McHenry, where they had also played on the 27th.

He makes only three on September 12: “Mary killed keeper” and on the following day, “hung Mary”; and on November 3, from Laurinburg, N.C.: “train wrecked.” Mary’s well documented fate, incidentally, did not change how the circus was billed: ads through the end of the season still touted her appearance as “the largest living land animal on earth, 3 inches taller than Jumbo.”¹¹⁸

Off the Road

McQuitty relocated to Philadelphia at the close of Sparks’ season. Before 1916 ended he had started what would become an eight-year stint playing bass in the house orchestras at John T. Gibson’s Standard and Dunbar Theaters. By 1921, he was operating “McQuitty’s Place,” which was “a recognized rendezvous center for the profession when they play that city.” He listed his residence, 1623 South Street, Philadelphia, as a boarding or lodging space for traveling black performers.¹¹⁹ McQuitty was also an early member of the Deacons Club of “Masonic Professionals and Associates” and organized a formal Corner for the Deacons in 1924. Started by Billboard Jackson and Billy King, the Deacons sought to provide connections for black entertainers when they were on the road; Corners, their havens, were opened in most major American cities.

In 1924, McQuitty went out on the road again for a brief, ill-fated tour with the *Shuffle Along* company. A big part of popularizing the Harlem Renaissance and modern jazz and jazz dancing, *Shuffle Along* was a legitimate Broadway hit, running for over 200 performances at the Sixty-Third Street Theater. It combined the talents of four

brilliant African Americans with deep roots in traveling vaudeville: Noble Sissle, Eubie Blake, Flournoy Miller, and Aubrey Lyles. Each of the show’s 18 songs were recorded and several became popular.¹²⁰ Traveling versions of the show had been successful and historical recollection suggests they remained so through 1924, but McQuitty’s experience was quite different. On October 18, 1924, the show closed after a week at the Princess Theatre in Toronto and he notes “\$5 a piece to company.” Four days later he writes: “Close Sat. bad shape. No one paid. Leave for Phila Pa. at 6:05 P.M.”

“At home” in Philadelphia, this time at 1123 Fitzwater St., McQuitty was without work for most of the next five months. He exchanged wires with T. C. Corwell “for job” and was visited by Watts, perhaps Al, one of his former show mates, to talk about work, but his route book is blank except for noting his residence until he took his first job with the Miller Brothers’ 101 Ranch for the 1925 season.

Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West 1925

McQuitty arrived in Marland, Oklahoma just in time for the season’s opening of 101 Ranch on April 18, joining the annex band led by Walter E. Mason. The revived and revised 101 Ranch was preparing to open for the first time since 1916. Little is known about Mason, a cornet player: he was in a rube band with O’Brien’s Georgia Minstrels #2 in 1915¹²¹ in February 1916, he joined P. G. Lowery’s band—which included McQuitty—with Richards and Pringle’s Georgia Minstrels.¹²² He led the band and orchestra for John B. Cullen’s Magnificent Minstrels in 1921 and the sideshow band with the Walter Main Circus in 1924.¹²³ He spent the months after Main closed and before 101 Ranch opened playing with a Doug Morgan repertoire tent show in Texas. McQuitty appears to be the only veteran with Mason’s band. None of the other players had worked formally in any bands with McQuitty, but he would work with several of them in future show bands. Albert Washington would be bandleader on Downie’s when McQuitty joined in 1935. Arthur and Fleta Gibbs, W. C. Ford, Charles Lattimore, and comic and buck dancer Archie Majors would work on Silas Green from New Orleans, another show McQuitty would join after his three-year stint with 101 Ranch. Also in the minstrel show produced by Mason in 1925 were another comedian and buck dancer, Ray Daniels; soubrette Baby Moore, “Queen of Blues Singers” and two other soubrettes who sang and danced, Fleta Gibbs and Sarah Mason.

Two of the three seasons McQuitty spent with 101 Ranch are well documented by Chang Reynolds in *Band-*

wagon articles from 1975. The 1925 season, he writes, “was marked for misfortune, ill-luck, and poor management.” Reynolds also asserts that Cols. Joe and Zack Miller had made the decision to go on the road again in 1924, adding that George Miller may have “counseled against the move.”¹²⁴ But a display ad in *Billboard* suggests the idea was being considered at least by August 1924. “Wanted,” it says, “First-class equipment for a 40-car show. Want to buy cars, wagons and equipment (no livestock) . . . delivery at close show season this fall. Everything must be first-class. We have decided to postpone our Round-up and Indian Pow Wow until next spring.”¹²⁵ In October 1924, Andrew Downie sold “the entire Walter L. Main Show to the Miller brothers” including railroad cars, wagons, horses, ponies, elephants, camels—all but the title. The Walter Main title had been leased by Downie in 1918; he kept it on the road until selling the physical plant, but not the title, to the Miller Brothers, after which he briefly retired before organizing the motorized Downie Brothers Circus for the 1925 season.¹²⁶ In November, Col. Joe Miller enumerated how big the show would be: at least thirty 70 ft. railroad cars transporting 500 people, 125 draft horses, 150 arena horses, 3 large trucks, elephants, steers, buffalo, and camels. J. H. “Doc” Oyler was announced as manager of the sideshow and Mason, “Director of the Side-Show Band and Minstrels,” in November advertisements that sought “25 first-class Colored Musicians” as well as “Feature Freaks, Curiosities, Novelty Entertainers, etc. Organized Troupe Real Hawaiians. Also three gentlemanly appearing Ticket Sellers capable [of] making second openings.”¹²⁷

Oyler stayed with Miller Brothers at least through the 1927 season. He managed two sideshows with the Polack Brothers railroad carnival in 1919, with their 20 shows in one slogan; his wife was a “second sight” (or clairvoyant) with it. He managed the annex stage show for Walter Main in 1923 and would have the same job with Downie in 1938. The Oylers retired to Perdix, Pennsylvania.¹²⁸

To collect the Main show property from its closing in Fredericksburg, Virginia, the Millers sent over a hundred workers, including elephant men Whitie Cline and Sam Logan. Stock and flat cars had been ordered from the Mt. Vernon Car Manufacturing Company by December; four Pullman sleepers, three motor trucks, and a grandstand had been purchased.

The Miller Brothers returned to the traveling show business with great expectations. Between 1908 and 1916, they had grossed over \$800,000. But by 1927, it had become “painfully clear” that the revived Ranch outfit “would never

turn a profit.” Each season, until it closed in 1931, was beset by bad weather, extensive competition, increasing expenses, and injuries to personnel and spectators that resulted in several law suits. In addition, Frontier Days had become a staple in many western towns, taking the place once held by traveling Wild West aggregations. The 101 Ranch troupe, to combat these trends and to compete with circuses, added several sideshow, animal, and human oddity acts.¹²⁹

The 1925 101 Ranch was “never as richly endowed with equipment as the earlier model.”¹³⁰ It traveled in later years on 30 rail cars, many of them new steel cars, including “a magnificent private car” for the Millers. Over 30,000 pounds of meat, fruit and vegetables produced on the 101 Ranch at Marland were shipped in refrigerated cars to the show once every ten days. Press releases described it as “the most magnificent tented attraction ever put on wheels.” Attendance started out strong but “crowds dwindled as the season wore on.”¹³¹

Two of 101 Ranch’s wagons are well documented, including the Pawnee Bill Bandwagon, brought into use “after being in obscurity for many seasons.” The Mighty Haag Show had bought it in 1908. It was used 1908-1914 on Haag, daily during nominal 30-week tours, then retired to Haag’s Shreveport winter quarters from 1915 to 1924. 101’s train carried 42 wagons, a car, a trick auto, 5 Mack trucks, a stagecoach, and a covered wagon. The railroad equipment was painted orange and purple, the wagons all yellow. The livestock included 19 steers, 8 bison, 6 elephants, 3 camels, 10 oxen, 72 baggage horses, and 29 broncos—not quite the 125 promised in pre-season plans. Tents included the performance canopy, two sideshows, a dressing tent, ring stock tent, two horse tents, a dining tent, kitchen, wardrobe, and steward’s ammunition. The parade: 31 units, with some of the wagons, “a quantity of riders,” and one star from the 101’s first incarnation, Cowboy Dan Dix with his trick mule, Virgil. In Charlotte, North Carolina, the parade boasted “300 Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho and Ponca Indians. . . novel in the extreme, with stage coaches and covered wagons, floats and tableaux wagons, clown carts and bandwagons alternating with groups of cowboys, cowgirls, Cossacks, Arabians and Mexican *rurales* ahorse.”¹³²

The show presented by the 101 Ranch featured in its first spectacular number, “Arabia,” oriental dancing girls, “queens of the desert” on elephants, men on horseback, “beautiful horsewomen,” and Russian and Arabian riders. Performing in the spec were a band in oriental costumes, directed by W. B. Fowler, and the annex band, directed by Walter E. Mason, as Slayman Ali and his Troupe of Arabs.

"Slayman Ali" is the only African American mentioned in Collings' 101 Ranch history—and it's a stage name that masks Mason's African-American identity; Wallis' book on the 101 makes no mention of black performers at all.

The 1925 season had its good days, but because it was for the most part performed in open arenas where spectators and performers were not as protected as under a circus tent, near-continuous rainy conditions during several significant portions of the tour were more troublesome. They met with rain from the beginning. At Kansas City for a two-day run, "rain greeted the parade" and didn't stop until after loading the next night. The lot was a "solid mire, the midway and arena completely covered by several tons of straw." Yet, the show's route book claims, "thousands were turned away" both nights.¹³³

A particularly bad stretch began at Washington, D.C. when the parade down Pennsylvania Avenue was in rain "and the weather did not improve for the rest of the day." A few days later, after a delay because of congestion at the Jersey yards, the season's first accident occurred at Albany, New York, when brakes on one wagon failed to hold on a hill during parade. It rolled onto the heels of a 6-horse hitch and the horses bolted towards a "crowd of women and children." One of 101's trick ropers, veteran Wild West performer Mexican Joe Barrara, rode up beside the leaders, and as he grabbed the near horse's bridle, his own mount stumbled and fell; Barrara was then "caught by any number of flying hoofs. However, he hung on and stayed with the leaders until he had guided them into the curb and brought the heavy vehicle to a sudden halt." No locals were hurt, but "six Indian maids" from the wagon were "hurled to the ground," one requiring subsequent hospitalization. Barrara suffered a broken leg. Doc Oyler's sideshow "registered the banner day of the season" at Albany. Press agent for the show Jerome T. Harriman noted that Doc Oyler had a "wonderful lineup of attractions" and "is getting his share of the business."¹³⁴

Oyler's sideshow included Selma Zimmerman, "the elephant girl"—an elephant trainer; Montana Hank, the 19-year-old giant cowboy, who was 8' tall and weighed 360 pounds; Madame Leatrice, "Queen of Reptiles"; Chief Ino, fire-eater and sword swallower; Dr. Frank La Marr lecturing "on the curse of opium use"; and Julia Little Snake, a 450-pound Ponca Indian woman. In July, Little Snake, also known as the Ponca Fat Woman, quit her job because her seat was "too hard even with a pillow"—but a better one was secured and she returned to work.¹³⁵ Also on the sideshow were Al Flosso's Punch and Judy Show; Millie Linn,

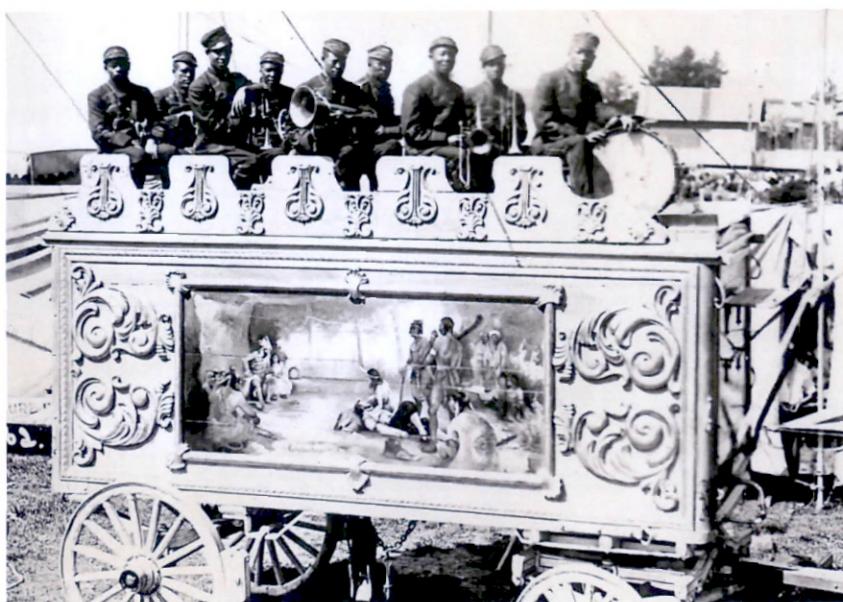
mind reader; Madame Leatrice, Queen of Reptiles; and Mose Smith, tattooed artist; and Millie Delamore. Fan Toy, a Chinese mission girl, accompanied Dr. La Marr, who was "authorized by the United States Government to talk on the curse of opium use." A separate Pit Show, managed by Gene R. Milton, featured an assortment of human oddities and wonders and an air calliope.¹³⁶

En route to Portland, Maine, on June 7, the No. 3 Advertising Car, the show's only advertising car, "plunged into a flood-swollen creek" at Quebec, Canada. William Pilkington, manager of the "Ranch brigade" and 14 of his men were trapped in the car by jammed and damaged doors. The car's gas tank exploded and the car was on fire when the men were rescued. The show's paper, its office safes, and some personal belongings were salvaged. The car was replaced and the show did not lose a day. Incredibly, the show reported to *Billboard* after all of these experiences that the tour had so far been "triumphal, spectacular, and sensational" with "eager throngs awaiting the show at every stand."¹³⁷

During July, Zack Miller left for ten days to attend the notorious Scopes trial at Dayton, Tennessee, taking along two recently acquired attractions: Little Joe, "the missing link," and Big Joe, a "gorilla," to "appear as witnesses in the Scope's trial should expert testimony be admitted in the case."¹³⁸

In August, the show added 50 Indians, two carloads of stock—one of horses and one of buffalo—and steers brought up from the 101 Ranch in Marland. A counterfeiter at Muncie, Indiana, was nabbed by the show's wrestler, Theodora Gorichvan, who happened to hear treasurer James Heron yell "Grab him, which the Tarzan did." In September, at Quincy, Illinois, the 101 saw its "first sunshine for nine days," and at Peoria, arrangements were finalized with silent film star John Lowell to make a motion picture based on the show.¹³⁹

Meanwhile, when it wasn't raining, opposition seemed to be everywhere, from Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey and Hagenbeck-Wallace especially, but also Christy Bros. and Gollmar Bros. Bad weather "dogged the show" for a week in New England, and the arena director's horse fell on him at North Adams, causing unspecified injuries requiring hospitalization.¹⁴⁰ At Taunton, Massachusetts, trick rider Clair Rogers "fell from her horse and was carried unconscious to the padroom but before the riders finished their stunts she returned to the arena and received heavy applause as she performed."¹⁴¹ At Brockton, Massachusetts, the stagecoach overturned during the afternoon perfor-



Above, the Indian Band was another feature on the 1927 101 Ranch show.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

Left, an undated photo of the 101 Ranch Minstrel Band on their parade wagon.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

Below, the 101 Ranch midway in 1931.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

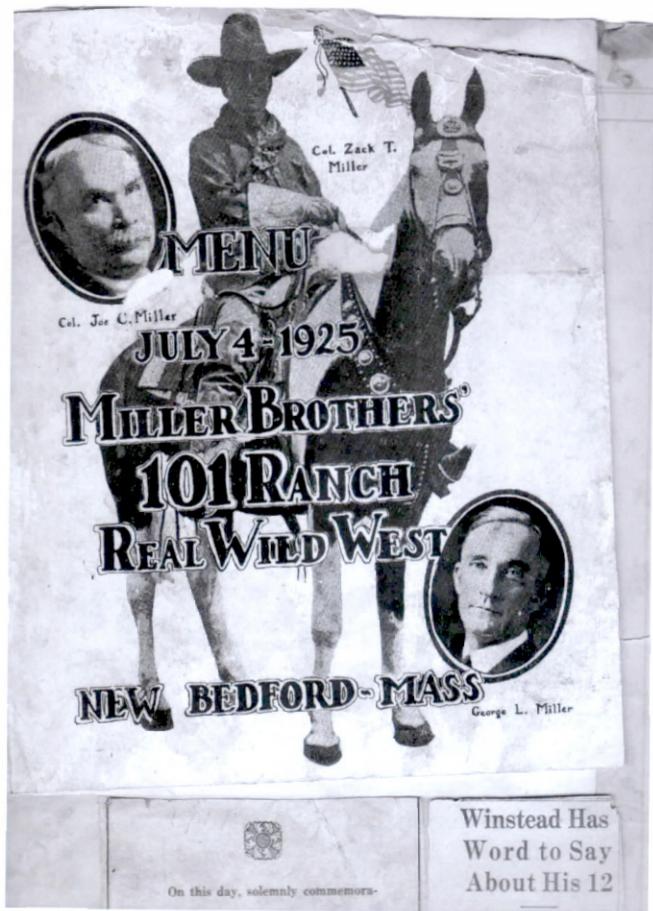
Next page top left, Col. Joe Miller of the 101 Ranch.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

Next page top right, a special menu for the Fourth of July celebration on the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch was kept in McQuitty's scrapbook.

Author's Collection





This National Print poster for the 101 Ranch was issued in 1927.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

mance, injuring several cowgirls. A high wind and lightning storm at Evansville, Illinois, in September “built up such strength that the canopy could not be saved. It went down with a crash and so did the hopes for a night performance.” At Gainesville, Florida, two sleeping cars were destroyed in a fire during which the rest of the train was uncoupled and three elephants used to move it to a safe distance. One of the cars had been occupied by staff; the other, by cowboys, cowgirls, and ticket sellers. The cars, worth \$15,000, were a total loss. At Roanoke, Virginia, as the Indians burned the covered wagon, someone called in an alarm to the fire department. In the ensuing confusion, after the firemen arrived on the scene, two steers were rammed by a fire truck and “had to be shot.”¹⁴²

During the 1925 season, the show was broadcast on local radio at Kansas City, Boston, Fall River, Massachusetts, and Schenectady, New York. Cowboys, Indians, Mason and his band, the herd of performing elephants, and Dan Dix and Virgil put on a show for children at a Boston hospital. At Auburn, New York, “all of the cowboys, cowgirls,” Dix and Virgil, and Mason and his band entertained at the local prison; Mason’s band also performed for prisoners at the Michigan State Prison at Jackson, Michigan. At Concord, Massachusetts, orphans of a local home and inmates from an asylum were guests of the show.¹⁴³ (143) At Detroit the entire show gave a morning performance for nearly 7,500 Detroit News boys—or 10,000, depending on source.¹⁴⁴

Crews also filmed the show several times during the season, and some of the dates included screenings of a documentary, “Wild West,” a 10-chapter serial that had been made by Pathé at the 101 Ranch in Marland, Oklahoma.¹⁴⁵ At Charlotte, North Carolina, on October 12, the film, with “a supporting cast of Pathé Screen artists, was shown at the Carolina Theater’s “day and date with the big top.”¹⁴⁶ The inclusion of documentary footage from both the ranch operations and its shows as a part of 101’s tours represented a unique intersection of entertainment forms, one near the end of its time and the other just beginning. Alison Fields notes that “while cultural and technological changes led to the decline of live shows and ushered in the age of western films, much overlap existed between these forms of entertainment in the first decades of the twentieth century. Many of the same Indian actors moved seamlessly between the realms of live and filmed performances, sometimes even reenacting the same historical events in multiple genres.”¹⁴⁷ For example, Lone Bear, a Sioux chief and medicine man in Sitting Bull’s camp, was one of several Native American veterans of the 1876 battle at Little Big Horn who were em-

ployed by 101 both as performers in its traveling shows and in films made as early as 1912.¹⁴⁸ Philip Deloria adds that the 101 Ranch “served in the early twentieth century as a primary bridge between the Wild West tradition and the new medium of film.”¹⁴⁹

The 1925 season ended suddenly at Birmingham, Alabama, on November 2nd, after having traveled 12,666 miles in 29 states and one Canadian province.¹⁵⁰ The Miller Brothers blamed excessive fees in Mississippi and the cost and requirement of dipping all stock because of hoof and mouth fears brought on by a Midwest epidemic. In closing announcements they also note “unsettled weather conditions and bad lots.” Weather, as Reynolds suggests, seems the primary factor: Hagenbeck-Wallace had already closed at Memphis because of the heavy rains across the South; Sparks had just done a 21-day tour of rainy dates in Alabama and Mississippi; and Christy Bros. was considering an early closing as the Miller Bros. called it quits.

A couple of reports to *Billboard* for its “Minstrel and Tent Show Talk” column by J. A. “Billboard” Jackson were likely submitted by “Deacon Mose McQuitty,” who listed the band personnel in one posting that also praised Doc Oyler’s management of the sideshow. Oyler, Jackson writes, is “one of the most congenial and one of the wisest showmen in the business. He is reported to be highly elated with the colored contingent of his outfit.”¹⁵¹

Mason’s band got a rare mention on *Billboard*’s regular Circus and Menagerie page, in a note written by 101’s press agent, Jerome T. Harriman, when the show was feted with a fancy Fourth of July feast after its matinee show at New Bedford, Massachusetts: his band “played the National airs while the courses were being served.”¹⁵² The dining tent was “highly decorated” with a “beautiful menu card placed at each plate.”¹⁵³ In the scrapbook portion of McQuitty’s route book, he kept the 4-page souvenir program from this event. Its 8-course menu included relish: young onions, celery, sweet pickles; soup: chicken with rice, clam chowder; fish: baked salmon, fried smelts; roast: young Vermont turkey, celery dressing, “Armour’s quality brand ham and mashed turnips”; entree: pot roast, egg noodles; vegetables: snowflake potatoes, asparagus tips in cream; dessert: vanilla wafers, cosmopolitan cream; drinks: fruit punch, spring water, coffee. No mention is made of when Mason’s band got to eat, or what they might have been served.

McQuitty’s route book adds some good details to 101 Ranch’s 1925 season, which otherwise has its African-American presence scarcely documented. He notes *Billboard* Jackson’s visit at Jersey City on May 14, and on Sun-

day, July 5, they visited Rocky Point, Massachusetts, where "Col. Frank gives clam bake for 101 show." At Jackson, Michigan, on August 21, an event not noted in the route book or by Reynolds: "visit prison, entertain prisoners." McQuitty had previously performed at this prison in 1921 with George Bryant's band from Rusco and Hockwald's Georgia. At Gainesville, Georgia, on September 9: "Cars no. 31 & 36 burned today."¹⁵⁴ At Richmond, Virginia on Oct. 21: "Buff Brady injured." On October 26 at Wilmington, North Carolina: "O'Brien's Minstrels in town."

On November 1, en route to Birmingham, Alabama, McQuitty alludes to a real gunfight: "Chief Jno. Johnson killed by Frisco RR Detectives. 3 men killed in action." The only related story reported by Birmingham press details an attempt by "three negro desperadoes" to rob a Frisco Railroad agent at his "watchman's shack." Killed by the agent was Bill Reed, identified as a former laborer with 101 Ranch who had been fired at Columbus, Georgia, "for causing trouble among the workers." Reed then allegedly "hoboed to Birmingham on the circus special." The agent also believed that he had wounded a second suspect during an unsuccessful chase.¹⁵⁵ McQuitty's note suggests that both suspects were fatally wounded, and also that one may have been playing the role of an Indian chief with the show, which helps explain McQuitty's use of "Chief" to describe Jonathan Johnson. Combined with the two brief news accounts, it also suggests the bigger mystery of who the third fatality was, and where and how their bodies were disposed of.

On the show's closing at Birmingham on November 2, McQuitty writes: "Cancel 2 wks acct weather conditions." He returned to Marland with Buddy Helms from the band; by the end of November, he had joined William Bryant's band with Rusco and Hockwald's Famous Georgia Minstrels for its winter tour of the Midwest and west.

Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West 1926

In 1926, Doc Oyler once again managed the 101 Ranch sideshow and Walter E. Mason had charge of the 15-piece black band, which returned most of the same players from the previous season. Except for Montana Hank, the sideshow acts were all new: Mme. Dupree, handcuff and escape artiste; Freddie Flannigan, the armless wonder; Mickey Mansion, tattooed man; Mrs. Fred Wilson, mind reader and fortune teller; Jolly Ollie, fat girl, who was on the pit show in 1925; Ruth Duncan, giantess; Hadji Lessik, gun spinner; Princess Norman, snake enchantress; Willie Dru-ger, magician and Punch and Judy show; Jessie Franks, bag

puncher; and 11 Hawaiian dancers.¹⁵⁶

The 1926 show, with "entirely new canvas" made by Baker-Lockwood Company to seat 12,000, tried a radically different route, concentrating more on the west coast than the New England states. But as in 1925, its routes were plagued by bad weather and opposition, and again the season was called off early, this time in Oklahoma. The opening spectacular, "Moscow," was costumed to represent the Orient, Russia, the Fiji Islands, and the Western Plains of North America; once again it included Mason's band, as well as two others.¹⁵⁷

Advertisements for the 1926 show boasted that it had the "largest and most picturesque street parade in the world" daily at 11:00 A.M., with "an entire Russian Cossack circus" and the "late Czar's band and choir."¹⁵⁸ But according to news reports, with 26 units—13 mounted riders and 13 wagons—the parade was smaller than the previous year's. Advertisements for 1925 had made the same claim, with this added one: "2 miles of picturesque pageantry."¹⁵⁹ It also traveled on 5 fewer railroad cars but with more livestock: 12 oxen, 9 steers, 16 bison, 5 camels, 6 elephants, and 78 baggage horses with 14 teams.¹⁶⁰

Early in the season, at St. Louis, a bison escaped for five hours before it was caught by bronc rider Douglass Todd, who then broke his leg while finishing a ride in the show. At Newark, New Jersey, showing in rain, two Cossack riders "smashed into each other while at full gallop"; one rider was injured and one horse killed. At Eaton, Pennsylvania, on June 22, the 8-horse hitch of the No. 1 bandwagon ran away, dashing "a few blocks before Tex Cooper and other parading cowboys pulled them down with no injuries." At Erie on July 9, high winds ripped the canopy during the night performance, several poles were snapped, but "none of the seats collapsed." After a delay, the show resumed, "even though the audience was soaked." One local was killed by a falling pole; several others were injured. At San Francisco during a four-day stand in September, another bronc rider, Buck Hutchinson, broke his leg during the show.¹⁶¹

Opposition from Sells-Floto was persistent and spilled over into fights resulting in arrests on at least two occasions. At Olean, New York, advance crews from both shows were brawling when arrested, and each side claimed the other was covering its paper. A few days later, at Erie, Pennsylvania, they were all arrested again after another brawl. The opposition resumed on the west coast in September.¹⁶²

Also in September, four dates were missed between Tucson and El Paso because of washed out rail lines, and a detour of 900 miles got the 10 back to Phoenix. Winslow,

Arizona, and Gallup and Albuquerque, New Mexico were wildcatted. The wildcat show at Gallup was trumpeted in the local press as being "almost as welcome as the arrival of Santa Claus." The performance was announced with a parade of "700 people, 4 bands, three calliopes, and 600 mounted people."¹⁶³

In Sherman, Texas, heavy rains flooded the lot and forced cancellations of both performances, and it only got worse: "The show continued to Oklahoma City, played Sapulpa, struggled to Henryetta and called the whole thing off at Muskogee on October 21. The whole area had been saturated with constant rain; rivers were over their banks, and the countryside flooded in many places." Dates had been scheduled through November 9. An epidemic of hoof and mouth disease in the region was the official reason for early closing, but as Reynolds notes, another problem was the Sells-Floto Circus, which "had caught up with the Ranch Show in Texas and some very close opposition was scheduled for Arkansas during the week following the actual closing of the 101 Ranch Show."¹⁶⁴ The 1926 season totaled losses for the Millers of \$119,970.¹⁶⁵

Within a month, McQuitty had joined the "Struttin' Sam from Alabam" company at Los Angeles after receiving a wire from its owner, Arthur Hockwald, and then a ticket. Hockwald was also one of the owners of the Georgia Minstrels. McQuitty toured with this show until closing at Brawley, California, on March 3. He picked up jobs with orchestras in Los Angeles, including two weeks with Ragtime Billy Tucker at \$35 a week, and another with his old pal George Bryant playing Morgan's Dramatic Shows for \$30 a week. On April 14, he noted in his route book "Recd \$20.50 from 101 Ranch show" and the next day "leave at 11:00 P.M. for Marland Okla." where he arrived at 10:40 A.M. on April 19 and began rehearsal the following day for his third season with 101.

Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West 1927

The 1927 sideshow was again managed by Doc Oyler, and the main band again remained basically the same, with Walter E. Mason directing. A Hawaiian Village, with band and dancers, returned from the 1926 season, and a band of Scotch Highlanders was added so that the show could parade with at least four bands. McQuitty is listed as the snare drummer in Mason's band but photographed in the formal portrait of Annex Number One with his euphonium. Returning to the roster of "attractions and freaks" from 1926 were Flannigan, Hank, and Duncan; Madame Leatrice, snake enchantress; and Mose Smith, tattooed man.

Chief Ino fire eater, was back after a year away. Added were Mlle. Delmore, female Raffles; Sir Albert, sword swallower; Madam Xenia, mental telepathist; and Madam Marcella, clairvoyant. Back from the 1925 season were Dr. Lamar and Fan Toy, who had changed out their opium lecture for a presentation on the "Underworld Exposed."¹⁶⁶

Reynolds' account of the 1927 season, "which brought the first heavy blows to the 101 Ranch and all of its operations including the Wild West show," is brief and includes few dates and incidents of note. Opposition from John Robinson and Ringling-Barnum caused trouble, and audiences were "sparse" in August and September from four weeks of rain. A \$25,000 lawsuit filed by a rider injured on the show was the "first of a number of suits that would beleaguer the 101 Ranch organization until its demise." A partial blow down hit in Philadelphia, equestrian director George L. Myers left at Fort Wayne, and "the usual number of injuries to riders and workmen" preceded the death, on October 21, of Col. Joe C. Miller.¹⁶⁷ The one "Minstrel and Tent Show" report during the season, likely sent by McQuitty to Billboard Jackson, said business was "flourishing" in New York. "The folks on the show are all smiles when business is good as the old ghost walks regularly when conditions are such. The ghost so far has never failed to walk on this show."¹⁶⁸

McQuitty's route book adds few details to 1927. At Marland, the final rehearsal was on April 22nd, the Grand Assembly on the 23rd, and opening day the 24th. En route to St. Louis, they stopped for "feed & water at K.C." In Philadelphia, at 11th and Lehigh Avenue, they had "big bus. all wk." Enigmatically, he writes "Gilbert joins for visit" on July 29 at Chester, Pennsylvania, and then on August 6 at Altoona, Maryland, "send Gilbert home." In Illinois, a "big fight by working men, col. & white" broke out, he writes for Sunday, September 4th, but it is not clear if the fight was at Terre Haute, where they showed on Saturday; en route; or at Peoria, where they showed on Monday.

After the Shawnee, Oklahoma date on October 15, McQuitty notes "big show band had to be paid. A. F. M. [American Federation of Musicians union] contract. Sideshow people strike. No pay. No show at night." On October 18, he notes "arrive Marland, leave for K.C." perhaps suggesting that the entire show had returned to its home base. McQuitty was "at home" in Keshauqua, Iowa, when he "read acct of Col. Joe Miller's death in Des Moines paper."

McQuitty's next professional gig was with Silas Green from New Orleans, one of the grandest and longest running of the vaudevillized minstrel shows, likely begun and

for several years owned by Eph Williams, an early African American circus proprietor.¹⁶⁹ McQuitty caught up with Silas Green in November in South Carolina. He toured with that show for nearly six years, with brief stints during its winter seasons off the road with Ross's Harlem Babies Orchestra and with George Bryant's orchestra playing for "millionaires at Jeckyll (sic) Island," South Carolina, which the band reached via "12 miles by boat."

Downie Bros. 1935

When McQuitty joined Downie Bros. Circus on May 4, 1935, he was returning to work for his former boss, Charlie Sparks, who had sold his railroad circus in 1928 for \$206,200, "a premium price for a medium-sized troupe and a tribute to the accrued goodwill the show developed as a result of superlative management." He "regretted the sale almost immediately" and in early 1929 bought the 50-truck Downie Bros. Circus from Andrew Downie, which he soon sold back to Downie. "An emotional wreck," Sparks spent the rest of 1929 at the Kellogg Sanitarium in Detroit and, under a doctor's care, "taking the baths" at Hot Springs, Arkansas. In March 1930, he bought Downie again, then sold it back Andrew Downie, an "escapade" which got him back into a Baltimore mental institution. Finally, in September 1930, having had "something of a psychic transformation," he took control of Downie once more and subsequently built it into a "beautiful operation with a first class performance and parade," guiding it through the Depression before his life "unraveled in 1938 and 1939."¹⁷⁰

The 1935 season which McQuitty worked for Charlie Sparks on Downie Bros. is well documented by Joseph T. Bradbury as part of the series published in *Bandwagon* in 1976, though few details are included about the annex band and performers. That season, Sparks replaced his star attraction for the past two years, Jack Hoxie, with another western screen star, Bill Cody, who had finished four movies recently and had two more to complete before reporting to winter quarters at Macon, Georgia in time for opening the season on April 17. Also added was H. C. Pickard and his Frisco Seals and June Williams, woman leaper.¹⁷¹

Cody was one of the busiest movie stars of the early 1930s. He broke onto the movie scene big in 1925, when he starred in eight feature films, and he was one of the few actors able to successfully make the transition from silent films to talkies and maintain his star status. Most of his 49 movies were made during the 1930s. Prior to joining Downie, he was a feature with the Miller Bros.' 101 Ranch in 1929 and the Bostock Wild Animal Circus in 1934, the

year he starred in *The Border Menace*, called by some "the worst B-Western ever made." He starred in six 1935 productions.¹⁷²

Hoxie's movie career, on the other hand, "faded quickly after sound, as even though he looked the part of a cowboy, his skills did not extend to sounding like one (he could barely read)." He was also with 101 Ranch in 1929 and then with the Schell Bros. Circus in 1931 before joining Downie in 1933 for a two-year engagement. Cody's 1935 season Downie would end abruptly, without known explanation, and Hoxie would return as Downie's star attraction in 1936. Hoxie headed his own circus in 1937 but was back with Downie in 1938; 1939 with Lewis Bros. Circus; 1940 with Bud Anderson's; and 1946-47 with the Mills Bros. Circus. He also went out with the Bill Tatum Circus in 1959.¹⁷³

Milt Robinson [likely a misspelling of the well-known Milt Robbins, who was the 1930 Downie sideshow manager and probably the man referred to here, in 1935] was sideshow manager, with Ralph Redden, inside lecturer, magician, and ventriloquist who also did a Punch show; Gertrude Redden, an impalement act; Gloria Hand, bag punching; Anna Living, snakes; Mitzi Robbins, mentalist; Luana Sanchez and a Hawaiian troupe of five, and Edward Washington's minstrel show with a an 11-piece band. McQuitty and Rastus Airship were two of the bandsmen; both had played with Washington on Walter Mason's sideshow band with 101 Ranch; Washington was bandleader on Sparks' annex in 1921.¹⁷⁴

The 1935 season, though not up to the 1934 standard, was "a pretty good one" for Downie, better than what most circuses experienced, despite rain—one August report said the show had hit "more than 60 days of rain so far"—opposition and an infantile paralysis epidemic in Virginia. The show traveled 11,459 miles without missing a date. When it closed, rumors were circulating that it would travel by train for 1936; instead, it would eliminate its daily parade.¹⁷⁵

McQuitty's route book again adds little to his 1935 circus season. To join Downie's, he left Silas Green from New Orleans suddenly, only a couple of weeks into its season, after nearly four years and without explanatory note other than "notice in" on April 29 and "closed here" at Augusta, Georgia, on May 1. On May 3, he caught up with Downie at Ashland, Kentucky, and started work the next day in Washington's sideshow band. On May 6 at Portsmouth, Kentucky, he writes "Shorty Hawkins died last nite." At Butler, Kentucky, on May 18, "Rastus Airship married June Hawkins." He closed with Downie at Brunswick, Georgia, on November 6, 1935 and within a week was at work with



Above, a view of the 1937 midway of the Downie Bros. circus.

The Ringling Museum,
Tibbals Collection

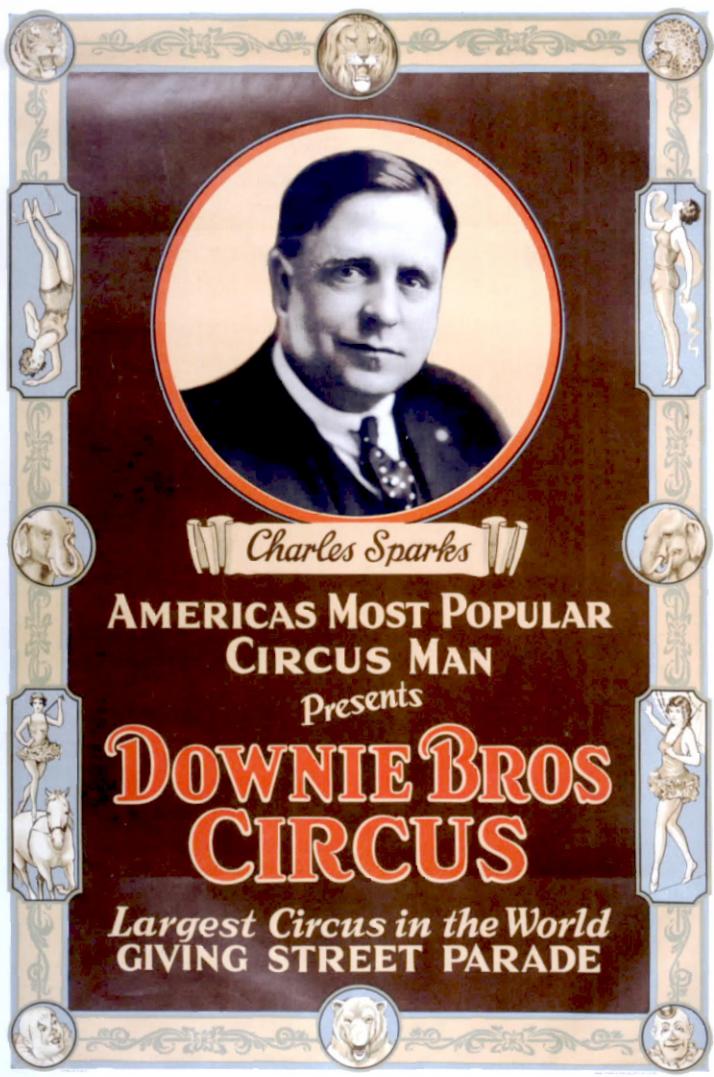
Left, a minstrel group performs on the Downie midway in 1938.

The Ringling Museum,
Tibbals Collection



In 1938 Edward Kelty took this shot of some of the performers from the Downie Bros. Annex.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection



Above is an Erie Litho poster for the Downie show produced by Charles Sparks.

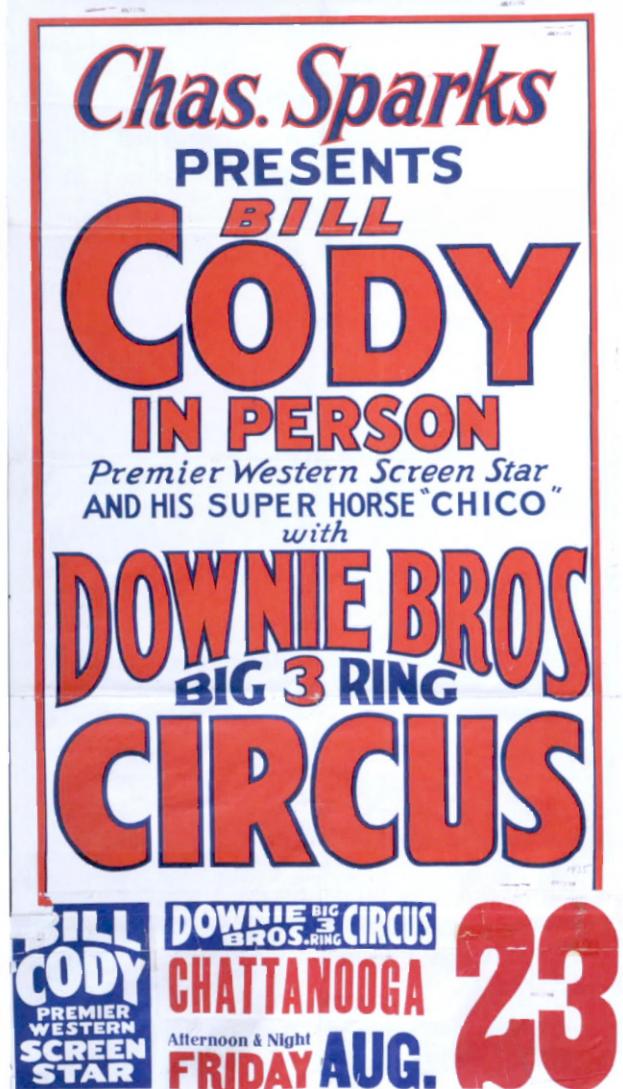
The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

Above right, Bill Cody was among the feature personalities whom Sparks signed up for the Downie Bros. circus.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

At right are pictured Charles Sparks (left) and Charles Bernard on the Downie lot in 1933.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection



Backer's Georgia Minstrels, owned by E. S. Winstead. They played one-week stands throughout the Deep South and late night dances, often for "ofays," earning sometimes as little as twenty cents a night but more commonly \$2-3. On July 20, he notes that he "give out on parade." On November 28, the show closed and he was "paid short." He then went to Fayetteville, where he rented a house from Winstead at 325 Williams Street. His last route book entries focus more on weekly paying his rent and furniture bills than on the occasional dance work he was able to get during the six months before he died. **BW**

Endnotes

1. "Mose McQuitty, Vet Actor, Dies at Fayetteville, N.C. *Chicago Defender* 17 July 1937: 10.
2. Hoh, LaVahn G. and William H. Rouse. "Black Wind-jammers." *The Circus in America* electronic ed. 2003. Charlottesville, VA. U of Virginia Inst. for Advanced Technology in the Humanities. *Circusinamerica.org*. Web. 5 Mar. 2015.
3. Abbott, Lynn and Doug Seroff. *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895*. Jackson, MS: UP of Mississippi, 2002.
4. McQuitty, Mose. Routebook [1937]. Collection of the author.
Mattie Sloan, longtime business manager for Winstead's Mighty Minstrels, whose owner, E. S. "Fat" Winstead, also owned Backer's Georgia Minstrels, gave me McQuitty's route book as well as the rest of her show memorabilia. Sloan was an admirer of McQuitty, who gave her the route book for safekeeping shortly before his Fayetteville house burned, and only a few days before he died. In 1986, Sloan's hairdresser in Fayetteville read a note attached to an article I had written for the *Fayetteville Observer* which indicated that I was interested in speaking to anyone who remembered Winstead's Mighty Minstrels. The hairdresser sent me Mattie Sloan's telephone number, and I visited her many times over the next few years as she patiently tried to explain to me what traveling life for black show folks was like "back in the day." Over the course of the next decade, I met more than 20 former show people who worked in vaudevillized minstrelsy from the early 1920s through the late 1950s, including William "Geechie" Robinson, one of two musicians I interviewed who played with McQuitty. "That cat could play," Robinson told me. "I mean, you hear him on that horn you'd swear you were hearing a string [bass]."
5. Watkins, Clifford Edward. *Showman: The Life and Music of Perry George Lowery*. Oxford, MS: U of Mississippi P, 2003: 38.
6. Slout, William. "Thompson, C. N." *Olympians of the Sawdust: A Biographical Dictionary of the 19th Century American Circus*. San Bernadino, CA, Borgo, 1998: 31.
7. Dahlinger, Fred, Jr. Email to author. 21 Mar. 2016. See also Dahlinger's "Snowballs to Baseballs: How the Ringling Circus Went from Baraboo to Sarasota," in *Bandwagon* 58.4: 33-34, 40
Dahlinger adds that, as the show's general manager, Thompson may have been the pivotal man in negotiating and ultimately agreeing to Lowery's enlargement/enhancement in the annex. Whether he had to clear it with owner Bailey or partners Cole and Sells is not known.
8. Watkins, Clifford Edward. *Showman: The Life and Music of Perry George Lowery*. Oxford, MS: U of Mississippi P, 2003.
---. "The Travels of the Showman Perry G. Lowery." *Bandwagon* Mar.-Apr. 2004: 22-26.
9. Abbott, Lynn and Doug Seroff. *Ragged But Right: Black Traveling Shows: "Coon Songs" and the Dark Pathway to blues and Jazz*. Jackson, MS: UP of Mississippi, 2007: 158.
10. "P.G. Lowery." *Indianapolis Freeman* 24 Dec. 1898: 4. This profile adds that Lowery's "triple-tongue execution is equal to any of the leading white soloists in the country."
11. Ferguson, Benny Pryor, III. *The Bands of the Confederacy: An Examination of the Musical and Military Contributions of the Bands and Musicians of the Confederacy*. Diss. Denton, TX: U of North Texas, 1987: 478.
12. Schwartz, Richard I. "The African American Contributions to the Cornet of the Nineteenth Century: Some Long-Lost Names." *Historic Brass Society Journal* 12 (2000): 61.
13. Johnson, James Weldon. *Black Manhattan*. 1930. New York: Knopf, 1940: 93.
14. Lewis, William. "Marching to the Beat of a Different Drum: Performance Traditions of Historically Black College and Marching Bands." *North Carolina Folklore Journal* 50.1 (Spr.-Wint. 2003): 23.
15. Johnson 95.
16. Handy, W. C. *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography*. 1941. New York: Da Capo, 1991: 16.
The circus mentioned by Handy has yet to be identified. It's also possible, as Fred Dahlinger, Jr., has suggested, that for Handy "circus" might have meant any

form of traveling show.

17. Kitchen, Robert. "19th Century Circus Bands and Music." *Bandwagon* Sept.-Oct. 1985: 15-17.

For coverage of white face minstrels establishing minstrelsy with circuses in the 1830s, online see: <http://www.circushistory.org/Thayer/Thayer2h.htm>

18. Abbott, *Out* 376.

An oft-repeated claim that Francis Johnson had led a circus band as early as 1824 confuses his having led musicians for a *hypodrama* production, "Cataract of the Ganges" in a building called a "circus"—now the Walnut Street Theatre—with having led an actual circus band. His musical leadership was not with a ring show circus. As Dahlinger, Jr. has noted, prior to 1826, "circus" generally meant the building or structure in which a performance was presented, not the show itself.

19. Handy 33, 62, 34

20. Lewis 20.

Young qtd. in Lewis 30.

21. Handy 35.

22. Advertisement. *New York Clipper*, August 15, 1903, 593.

23. Abbott, *Ragged* 176-77, 158.

24. Sampson, *Blacks* 31.

Jackson's "Page" was formally called "J. A. Jackson's Page in the Interest of the Colored Actor, Showman & Musician of America." It usually covered at least 2 pages and included regular features such as "Minstrel and Tent Show Talk" and "Here and There Among the Folks" as well as reports from the field on individual shows and artists.

25. Jones, Willie. qtd. in *Boogie in Black and White*. Dir. Susan Massengale. Chapel Hill, NC: UNC-TV, 1988.

26. Abbott, *Ragged* 199.

27. Watkins, *Showman* 99.

Abbott and Seroff write: "The American circus is afflicted with a pernicious history of racial discrimination. Throughout the early twentieth century, circuses exploited the popular demand for black musicians and performers while mindfully segregating and subordinating them to their sideshows." (*Ragged but Right* 6-7)

28. Stencell, A. W. *Seeing is Believing: America's Sideshows*. Toronto, Ont.: ECW Press, 2002:178.

29. Dunbar, Paul Laurence. *Lyrics of Lowly Life*. New York, Dodd: 167

30. Abbott, *Out of Sight* 201, XVII.

Abbott and Seroff document use of the phrase "out of sight" as a descriptive even before Will Rossiter's "It's Way Out of Sight" was published on sheet music in 1890.

In *Ragged but Right* (p. 11), Abbott and Seroff also demonstrate the evolution of the "coon song" of the 1880s into the "ragtime coon song" that was introduced in 1897.

31. Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. Chicago: McClung, 1904. Web. 11 Mar. 2015: 257.

32. Du Bois 179.

33. Du Bois: 202.

34. Braathen, Sverre O. "Circus Windjammers." *Bandwagon* 15.3 May-June 1971: 12-23. [Circushistory.org](http://www.circushistory.org). Web. 28 Mar. 2016.

Dahlinger notes that several sideshow rosters are present in Braathen's research documentation. His primary interest focused on the circus music that was specially composed to accompany ring performance and grand entrees, and big top musicians and bandleaders that played it—the "windjammers"—a term generally not applied to sideshow bands. The music of the sideshow was outside his specialty. Show rosters printed in trade journals and route books were a major source for his work.

35. Bakner, Andrew J. "Sideshow Attractions." *Bandwagon* 17.6 Nov.-Dec 1973: 35-38.

36. Lewis, Billy. "At Ringling Bros. Shows, Big Attractions Pulled from Every Direction." *Indianapolis Freeman* 20 May 1916.

37. McQuitty, Mose. Routebook.

38. Abbott, *Out of Sight* xi.

39. *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*. Montgomery, AL: Equal Justice Initiative, 2015: 4-5.

40. "Negro Minstrel Man Lynched, Missouri People Kill Richard & Pringle's Musician." *Macon (Ga) Telegraph* 18 Feb. 1902. [Genealogy.com](http://www.genealogy.com). Web. 14 Mar. 2015

Handy 43, 63.

Sampson, *Ghost* 246-248, which reprints a long, anonymous about the lynching of Wright from the 15 Mar. 1902 *Indianapolis Freeman*.

Woodbine. "The Stage," *Indianapolis Freeman* 8 Mar. 1902: 5.

McQuitty played with Richards and Pringles' Georgia Minstrels during the 1915 season, when Lowery was its band director.

41. Abbott *Ragged* 158.

42. Abbott *Ragged* 159-162.

43. Watkins, *Showman* 38.

In the *Freeman*, Lowery's show with Forepaugh-Sells

is also referred to as P. G. Lowery's Nashville Students and Famous Concert Band. Prior to joining Forepaugh-Sells, it was also known as P. G. Lowery's Famous Concert Band with the Georgia Up-to-Date Minstrels.

44. Watkins, Clifford Edward. "The Travels of the Showman Perry G. Lowery." *Bandwagon* Mar.-Apr. 2004: 24.

45. "Adam Forepaugh-Sells Bros." Advertisement. *Kansas City Star* 20 Aug. 1899: 3.

46. "Famed Minstrel." Newspaper clipping. N. D. "Lowery" File. Circus Historical Society. 4 Mar. 1996.

47. Watkins "Travels" 43.

48. Lowery, P. G. Letter. Indianapolis *Freeman* 25. Nov. 1899: 5.

49. Abbott, *Ragged* 159-160.

50. Lowery, P. G. "Notes from P. G. Lowery's Vaudeville show." Indianapolis *Freeman* 7 Oct. 1899: 5.

51. Jackson, J. Harry. "The Stage." Indianapolis *Freeman*. 29 July 1899: 4.

52. Lowery, Letter.

53. Abbott, *Ragged* 160-161, 206

54. Lowery, Letter.

55. Jackson, J. Harry 28 Nov. 1899: 5.

Lowery likely means that his band will perform at an after-show concert in the "big top" during the 1900 season.

56. Watkins, *Showman* 40

57. Jackson, J. Harry. 5 May 1900: 5; 2 June 1900: 5.

58. Jackson, J. Harry. 5 May 1900: 5.

59. Abbott, *Ragged*: 160.

60. Jackson, J. Harry. 5 May 1900: 5

61. Jackson, J. Harry. 7 July 1900: 5

62. Pfening, Jr. Fred D. "The Season of 1900: The Circus Year in Review." *Bandwagon* Nov.-Dec. 2000: 5.

63. Pfening, Jr. 5-6.

Unconfirmed newspaper accounts suggest that he may have been destined for the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh.

64. Pfening, Jr. 6.

Conover, in *Affairs of James A. Bailey*, states that after Ephraim Sells' death in 1898 the two Sells Bros., Bailey and Cole each owned a 1/4 interest in Forepaugh-Sells, an arrangement that continued until 1905.

65. Singers and their songs are reported by Lowery in his regular reports to the *Freeman* in J. A. Jackson's "The Stage" column: 5 May 1900:5; 12 May 1900:5; 2 June 1900: 5; 30 June 1900:5; 7 July 1900: 5; 14 July 1900: 5; and 21 July 1900: 5.

66. "Hey Rube" 123.

67. Wintz, Cary D. and Paul Finkelman. "Egbert Austin 'Bert' Williams." *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance*. 1943. New York: Routledge, 2004: 1210.

68. Jackson, J. Harry. 12 May 1900): 5.

69. Jackson, J. Harry. 2 June 1900): 5.

70. Jackson, J. Harry. 30 June 1900: 5.

71. Jackson, J. Harry. "The Stage." 14 July 1900): 5.

Dahlinger notes that Towers (1849?-1923) had a 53-year public performance career, circa 1865-1918, initially as a renowned and competitive snare drummer, later achieving prominence as a sideshow manager, talker and orator. He was manager of the Sparks 1915 sideshow, when McQuitty was with it. The Musser Museum, Muscatine, Iowa, has a photo of Towers' residence at 713 W. Front Street.

72. Jackson, J. Harry. 21 July 1900): 5.

I can find no reference to the term "gigwauk" or the variant "gigwalk."

73. Jackson, J. Harry. 18 Aug. 1900: 5.

74. Jackson, J. Harry. 15 Sep. 1900: 5.

75. Jackson, J. Harry. 22 Sep. 1900: 5.

76. Jackson, J. Harry. 8 Sep. 1900: 5.

77. Jackson, J. Harry. 29 Sep. 1900: 5.

78. "List of Lynchings in Tennessee and Other States." Melungeon-L Archives. Rootsweb. Web. 14 Mar. 2015.

"Black Ripley." History and Genealogy of African Americans in Ripley, TN and Surrounding Areas. Blackripley.com. Web. 14 Mar. 2015.

79. Jackson, J. Harry. 10 Nov. 1900: 5.

80. Jackson, J. Harry. 24 Nov. 1900: 5.

Smith, who "rose from bricklayer to bandmaster," had "quite a romantic career" that intrigued, among others, President Theodore Roosevelt. (Sampson, *Ghost* 403.) McIntosh (1840-1904) was one of the best known of the early African American comedians, featured in the original Georgia Minstrels in the 1870s and later as leading comedian with the Black Patti Troubadours, Rusco and Holland's Big Minstrel Festival, and The Smart Set, among others. See both Abbott and Seroff books and both books by Henry Sampson.

81. Woodbine. 16 Feb. 1901: 5; 15 June 1901: 5.

82. Woodbine. 29 Oct. 1904: 5.

83. McQuitty, Mose. "Why Allen's Minstrels Closed." Indianapolis *Freeman* 10 Apr 1915: 5.

84. Allen, A. G. "Truth about A. G. Allen's Minstrel Show." Indianapolis *Freeman* 10 Apr. 1915: 6.

85. Rue, Charles E. "Notes of A. G. Allen's Minstrels." Indianapolis *Freeman* 1 May 1915: 6.

George Quine had retired as manager in December 1914 and Allen, the owner, had taken over as manager.

86. qtd. in Abbott, *Ragged*: 176

87. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the

Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 8 May 1915: 6.

88. "Minstrel and Tent Show Talk." *Billboard* 23 June 1923: 50.

89. *Billboard*. Transcribed notes. 23 Jan. 1915. Circus Historical Society. Web. 14 Mar. 2015.

90. Adams, E. W. "A Day with Sparks' Circus." *Billboard* 21 Oct. 1916: 27.

91. Adams.

92. *Billboard*. Transcribed notes. 13 Feb. 1915. Circus Historical Society. Web. 14 Mar. 2015.

93. *Billboard*. Transcribed notes. 6 Mar. 1915. Circus Historical Society. Web. 14 Mar. 2015.

94. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 5 June 1915: 5.

95. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 8 May 1915: 6.

96. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 24 Apr. 1915: 6.

97. Abbott, *Ragged* xx

98. *Billboard*. Transcribed notes. 17 Apr. 1915. Circus Historical Society. Web. 14 Mar. 2015.

99. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 24 Apr. 1915: 6.

100. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 15 May 1915: 6.

101. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 17 July 1915: 5.

102. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 31 July 1915: 5.

103. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 13 Aug. 1915: 5.

104. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 25 Sept. 1915: 6.

105. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 13 Nov. 1915: 7. I can find no period meaning of "yark." McQuitty separates the line with "yark" as its own paragraph, perhaps for some intended emphasis.

106. "Notes from A. A. Wright's Band & Co. with Sparks' Bros. Show." Indianapolis *Freeman* 13 Nov. 1915: 5. Col. J. C. O'Brien's Famous Georgia Minstrels is sometimes confused with Richards and Pringle's Famous Georgia Minstrels.

107. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 4 Dec. 1915: 5.

108. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 24 Apr. 1915: 6.

109. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 4 Dec. 1915: 5.

110. "Richards and Pringle's Minstrels." Indianapolis *Freeman*. 1 Jan. 1916: 6.

111. "News of the Players. Indianapolis *Freeman* 6 Nov. 1915: 6.

112. Abbott, *Ragged* 177

113. Wells, Al. "Alexander Tolliver's Show." 6 Nov. 1915: 6.

114. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 20 May 1916: 5. Dahlinger notes that the names mentioned here with stated car numbers were likely identifying the black porters assigned to those cars.

115. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 7 Oct. 1916: 6.

116. McQuitty, Mose. "M. McQuitty Writes from the Sparks Shows." Indianapolis *Freeman* 18 Nov. 1916: 6.

117. "Notes from J.A. Harris' Band and Minstrel with Gollmar Bros." Indianapolis *Freeman* 7.1.16: 7

118. "Sparks Circus." Advertisement. Clinton [NC] *News Dispatch*. 9 Nov. 1916: 1.

119. "McQuitty's Place." Advertisement. *Billboard*, 31 Dec, 1921: 59.

120. Jackson, J. A. "The Present Situation of the Colored Performer." *Billboard* 10 Dec. 1921: 16.

121. Abbott *Ragged* 214.

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125. "Wanted: First Class Equipment," Advertisement. *Billboard* 18 Aug. 1923: 79.

126. Bradbury, Joseph T. "Downie Bros. Circus, 1926-1929." *Bandwagon* Nov.-Dec. 1975.

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131. Wallis 496-498

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(sleepers) and one advance car, a total of 39. (State of Wisconsin Public Service Commission records, Circus World Museum.) These were generally 60-foot long wooden frame cars. As the 101 Ranch continued and eventually converted to longer 70-foot steel cars, the number of cars in the train was reduced. The 30 cars for 1926-1930 included 9 stocks, 11 flats, and 9 sleepers, one in advance. These numbers are also specified in railroad contracts, which are very accurate.

133. Harriman, Jerome T. *Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Real Wild West and Great Far East*. Official Season's Route, 1925. [np] [27-28 Apr 1925]

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Harriman's grandson is currently researching and writing his grandfather's bio.]

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136. Reynolds 1925: 8.

137. Reynolds, "101 Ranch" part one *Bandwagon* Mar.-Apr. 1975: 9.
"101 Ranch Show." *Billboard*. 27 June 1925: 60.

138. Reynolds 1925: 9.

139. Harriman, *Miller*.

140. Harriman, *Miller*.

141. Harriman, "101" 18 July 1925.

142. Harriman, *Miller*.

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145. "101 Ranch." Advertisement. 10 Oct. 1926. *Charlotte Observer*: 15.

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147. Fields, Alison. "Circuits of Spectacle: The Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch Real Wild West." *American Indian Quarterly* 36.4 Fall 2012: 443-464. Web. 5 Mar. 2015

148. Wallis, 374-75.
Wallis also details the racism endured by these Native American employees of 101.

149. Deloria, Philip. qtd. in Fields.

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151. Jackson, J.A. "On the 101 Wild West." *Billboard* 2 May 1925: 51.
"With Walter Mason." *Billboard* 2 May 1925: 51.

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154. "Prison Welfare Work by Colored Organizations."

Billboard. 11 June 1921. McQuitty Route Book, scrapbook clipping. n.p.

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166. Wallis 499.

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"The ghost walks" was a common phrase in general use on 19th century traveling shows, and perhaps in other theatrical trades, meaning that employees were being paid. See Tony Parker's 1910 memoir *On the Road with a Wagon Show 53 Years*. Circushistory.org. Web 30 Mar. 2016.

169. For more on Eph Williams, see Dahlinger, Jr.'s "Eph Williams" in *Badger State Showmen: A History of Wisconsin's Circus Heritage*, which he wrote with Stuart Thayer (Madison, WI: Grote, 1998: 101-102), and Abbott and Seroff's *Ragged but Right*: 307-355.

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171. Bradbury, Joseph T. "Downie Bros. 3 Ring Circus pt. 3, 1934 and 1935." *Bandwagon*. May-June 1976: 21.

172. Hopwood, Jon. "Bill Cody. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0168565/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1 Biography." Web. 8 Mar. 2015.

173. Beaver, Jim. "Jack Hoxie." Biography. <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0398300/bio> Web. 8 Mar. 2015.

174. "Downie Bros. Band in Circus Scores Big Hit." *Chicago Defender* 19 Sept. 1921: 5.

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The 101 Ranch sideshow band in 1928, the season after McQuitty left the show, taken by Frederick Glasier.

The Ringling Museum, Frederick Glasier Glass Plate Negative Collection



The Silas Green Band with Mose McQuitty second from right. Notice the variety of uniforms.

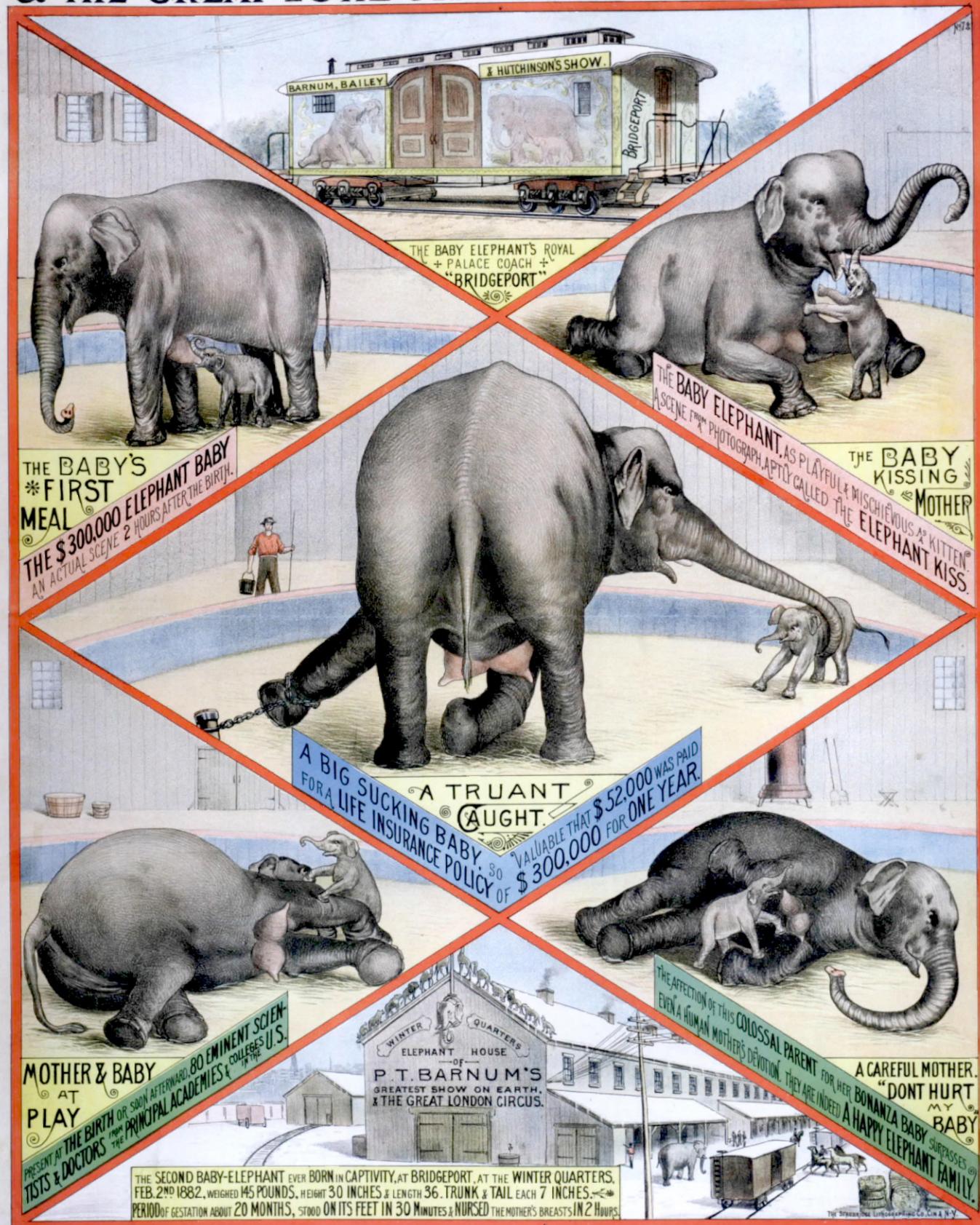
Author's Collection



The Silas Green from New Orleans band, about 1928. Mose McQuitty can be seen at the far left in the third row and Charles Collier in middle in row four.

Author's Collection

P.T. BARNUM'S GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH, & THE GREAT LONDON CIRCUS COMBINED WITH



SANGER'S ROYAL BRITISH MENAGERIE & GRAND INTERNATIONAL ALLIED SHOWS.
* LAST TOUR IN AMERICA. * VISITS EUROPE NEXT YEAR. * BARNUM, BAILEY & HUTCHINSON, SOLE OWNERS. * DAILY EXPENSES \$ 4,800.00 REPRESENTING \$ 30,000,000.00 *

The Barnum & London show issued a number of lithos advertising the baby elephant.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

Bridgeport: Barnum's First Baby Elephant

by Morgan Ellison

Bridgeport was only the second elephant to have been born in the United States. The first elephant, a female named Columbia, was born to the Cooper and Bailey Circus in early 1880. Envious, P. T. Barnum offered to buy the elephant for a reported sum of \$100,000, an offer that the circus owners cleverly incorporated into their advertising. In his autobiography, Barnum claimed it was this maneuver that made him respect Bailey enough to partner with him in the circus business. It was not for another two years that Barnum would achieve his dream of breeding a baby elephant of his own and he did so only with the help of Bailey and Cooper's elephant man, Colonel George Arstingstall.

Bridgeport was born on February 2nd 1882 in the winter quarters of the Barnum show in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Her parents were Queen and Chieftain, Ceylonese elephants that had been brought to the United States in 1871 and 1867, respectively. According to a *New York Times* article announcing the birth of the elephant, she was "30 inches in height, 36 inches in width, and weighed 145 pounds." The weight meant that baby Bridgeport was about $\frac{1}{3}$ smaller than Columbia had been at birth. Bridgeport was said to be a "bluish color at birth" but soon "changed to a delicate mouse shade." Her trunk was measured and found to be "7½ inches in length."¹ The female elephant was christened America at birth but came to be known as Bridgeport after her birthplace.²

At the time of Bridgeport's birth, Barnum and Bailey had 20 elephants, including the young Columbia. Supposedly all the other elephants were present to witness the birth of Bridgeport and Columbia immediately expressed interest in playing with the new baby elephant, though she was prevented from doing so by Arstingstall. Bridgeport and Columbia toured together on the circus until Bridgeport's death, billed as the "only two baby elephants born in captivity."³ In 1882, Barnum wrote that he was overwhelmed with business, "all of which is locked up in two trunks," the first belonging to "my little Baby Elephant 'Bridgeport'" and the second belonging to the African el-

ephant Jumbo that had arrived in the United States only a couple of months after the birth of Bridgeport.⁴ Reportedly, Barnum secured a yearlong insurance of \$300,000 on the baby elephant. According to the *New York Times*, Barnum felt that "the attraction will be so extraordinary that he can well afford to pay that enormous sum of money for an insurance on her life."⁵

At only four years old, Bridgeport died on April 12th 1886 in the winter headquarters where she had been born. She weighed about 1,500 pounds at the time. Some sources incorrectly claim that Bridgeport died in a fire, however this is not the case. According to later research, it was suggested that the young elephant may have died of a brain tumor.⁶ The preserved body of Bridgeport was initially given to the Tuft's Museum of Natural History, which was under the care of Professor John P. Marshall, Tuft's first professor of Natural History. In August of 1886, Barnum wrote to Professor Ward to say that Professor Marshall had written to say that Bridgeport was placed in the museum and to give Ward a \$275.00 check for his services in preserving the young elephant.⁷ Professor Ward was Barnum's on-call taxidermist, the one who had preserved Jumbo's hide and skeleton a year before. Presently, Bridgeport resides in the Barnum Museum in the elephant's birthplace and namesake, Bridgeport, Connecticut. **BW**

Endnotes

1. "Barnum's baby elephant: great rejoicings over its birth at Bridgeport", *The New York Times*, February 4, 1882
2. Susan Nance, *Entertaining Elephants: Animal Agency and the Business of the American Circus*, 2013
3. *Ibid*
4. P. T. Barnum to unknown, March 27, 1882, the Tibbals Collection, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art
5. "Barnum's baby elephant"
6. *The Bridgeport Post*, May 5, 1968, pg. 9
7. P. T. Barnum to Professor Ward, August 28, 1886, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art

P.T.BARNUM'S GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH, & THE GREAT LONDON CIRCUS COMBINED WITH

Oh, That Precious BABY ELEPHANT!

There were present at the birth, or immediately afterward,

SO NOTED

Scientists AND Savants

From every academy and college of the entire Eastern States, and the next day the New York Papers published

Over 100 Columns of
COMMENT
giving graphic details of the accouchement.
The Period of Gestation is
20 MONTHS

The Baby was strong enough to stand on its feet and walk about in 80 minutes, and

NURSED IN 2 HOURS AFTER BIRTH.

The Elephant mother is the only 4-footed beast on Earth whose gigantic breasts are between the fore-arms or fore-legs. The baby nurses with the mouth and not with the trunk as taught by modern writers.

James E. Cooper, 1215 Wallace St., Phila. Pa., offered

\$100,000 for the Baby.

when 16 hours old.

It is insured for

\$300,000.

The premium being \$1,000 per week, making a total of \$52,000 for one year.

FATHER, MOTHER, & BABY

will be exhibited together with the Ten Thousand additional attractions, with out extra charge. A

HAPPY & CONTENTED ELEPHANT FAMILY

BABY ELEPHANT.



THE WONDERFUL

BONANZA BABY!

Born at Bridgeport, Conn., at our Winter Quarters, Feb. 2d, 1882, at 8 o'clock P.M.

THE SECOND

Baby Elephant Ever Born in Captivity

The fine is two years old and weighs 1,800 pounds, and both are very well.

Stupendous and Novel CONSOLIDATION

The mother, Queen, is 23 years old, weighs 6,800 pounds, and belongs to J. A. Bailey, now P. T. Barnum's and J. L. Hutchinson's partner, who made a

Complete Journey Around the World in 1876, '77 and '78. She was a principal attraction with the

International Allied Shows

and appeared before mixed audiences and large audiences in New Zealand, Tasmania, Australia, Java, India, and the Republics of Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil, landing in New York December 9th, 1878.

THE FATHER IS
CHIEFTAIN,

WEIGHT, 8,800 POUNDS,
and of the London Circus herd of Asian Elephants. The

BABY HAS BEEN NAMED
BRIDGEPORT

In honor of Hon. P. T. Barnum and its birth-place.

Its weight was 145 pounds, height 30 inches, length 3 feet, and

TRUNK & TAIL

each 7 inches long.

The color is a pinkish brown, eyes twinkling black, and disposition

Playful and Mischiefous.

SANGER'S ROYAL BRITISH MENAGERIE & GRAND INTERNATIONAL ALLIED SHOWS

* LAST TOUR IN AMERICA
VISITS EUROPE NEXT YEAR. * BARNUM BAILEY & HUTCHINSON SOLL OWNERS. * DAILY EXPENSES \$ 4,500⁰⁰
REPRESENTING \$ 3,000,000⁰⁰ *

THE BABY ELEPHANT CRAZE

10,000,000 People have seen the Precious Baby since it left its Native City in April.

The Prodigy for which Barnum offered \$100,000 has cleared \$300,000 for its lucky owners.

Tremendous outpouring of the populace at every pause! The Theme of Learned Savants! Press and Public!

PHILADELPHIA,

One Week Only, commencing

MONDAY, SEPT. 13,

LOCATION

NORTH BROAD ST., COR. OF MONTGOMERY AVE.

ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC:

When the Baby Elephant was born in this city the 10th of March last, every paper of any consequence noticed it elaborately. The fact was cabled across the Atlantic to the Old World, and every illustrated publication of America and Europe sent intelligent artists to make portraits of it and its Colossal Mother. These were published extensively and circulated widely. Zoological Gardens and acute Managers made fabulous offers for it, Mr. Barnum among the number to first bid \$100,000 for it as he since publicly confesses. Its proprietors resisted every overture, determining to exhibit it solely and exclusively under their own individual management. The Eastern States were chosen as the field, and the crowds which flocked to see it the largest gatherings ever seen anywhere on earth. The receipts have run up to from \$6,500 to \$10,000 daily, and no less than three times have the pavilions been enlarged. Even then it was found impossible to hold the people, and thousands have been turned from the doors almost every day unable to gain admission. No less than \$300,000 have been made clear of all expenses from the Exhibition of this Phenomenal Baby. We exhibited here early in the Spring, but the crowds which were almost daily turned from our doors for want of room to get inside have requested our return. To their's, and the appeals of the Press, we have listened, and once more present Philadelphia's Native Baby. From 213 pounds, its weight when born, it has now grown to 550 pounds, and disdains any other food than the nourishment furnished from its Mother's Breasts. The Scientific Institutions of the Quaker City, no less than the public, will have a marvelous interest in the exhibition of this Wonderful Baby, whose birth, growth and development they have so carefully watched from the first warning of its coming until now. To our neighbors and fellow citizens we present it—the greatest novelty ever known to science—and the only Baby Elephant ever born in Bondage in the wide world.

The Public's Obedient Servants,

JAMES E. COOPER,
JAMES A. BAILEY.

Phila., Aug. 28, '80.

Merrilow & Son, Printers, 135 North Third Street, Philad'l'a.

HT4000458

James Bailey and James Cooper of the Great London Circus proudly announced the birth of their baby elephant, the first born in captivity in America.

CONTINUATION OF THE COMPACT

SECOND GRAND SEASON OF THE
BARNUM AND LONDON SHOWS UNITED

WITH THE HIPPODROME AND
MANY OTHER ATTRACTIONS ADDED.
THE WORLD RANSACKED FOR ALL ITS WONDERS

+ 21 BIG ELEPHANTS

2 WONDERFUL
BABY ELEPHANTS

MORE ANIMALS EXHIBITED, MORE HORSES USED,
MORE PEOPLE EMPLOYED, MORE CURIOSITIES SHOWN,
MORE YARDS OF CANVAS SPREAD, MORE MATERIAL IN PARADE,
MORE CIRCUS GIVEN, MORE HIPPODROME DISPLAYS,
AND MORE CAPITAL INVESTED
THAN ALL OTHER SHOWS
IN AMERICA

IF THEY WERE PUT TOGETHER.

COVERING THE LARGEST TENT EVER ERECTED IN THE WORLD.
THE IMENSE HIPPODROME OF 3 CIRCUSES.
SEATING 20,000 PEOPLE.
MENAGERIE TENT NO. 1. MENAGERIE TENT NO. 2.

DAILY EXCURSIONS ON ALL RAILROADS.

1882

The Barnum & London show issued a number of lithos advertising the baby elephant.

Both images from the Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

Confessions of the Clowns

Where America's famous joeys come from and what they look like without makeup are revealed in this dressing-tent story of the world's most romantic profession



Arthur Borella, above and at left, played the violin and it led him to become "the highest-paid clown in the world."



Herman Joseph, above and at left, scored his biggest hit . . . by rushing in with a "Fire Sale" sign.



A golfer in his leisure hours . . . Slivers Johnson, left and above, gets comedy ideas from the links.



At the wheel of a trick flavor . . . Mickey Blue, right, demonstrates one of the more elaborate clown stunts.



But with all the alluring features of the business, clowning has its tragedies, its problems and its embarrassments. There are often mishaps which injure the performers. Arthur Borella was laid up for several days some time ago

with a sprained ankle, suffered while chasing a pig in the show. Earl Shipley has suffered a dislocated shoulder on three occasions while clowning. Once he was kicked by a horse in the ring, once he fell from a trick auto, and again while doing a fall on the ground to create laughter.

One night Arthur Borella was playing with his circus in a little Michigan village. The tent was filled with good-natured farmers and townpeople. He had a new act. He had apparently stolen a baby, and as he ran round the ring with his rag doll, the clown cap chased him. As he stepped into the dressing tent, the equestrian director handed him a cap. It was from his home and stated simply that his own baby was dead.

Inside the big tent, the band trumpeted, the ringmasters cracked their whips and the people laughed. The whole circus fun was on. "Come on Arthur, we're waiting for you," came the cry. "I had to go back," Borella recalls. "I had to make others laugh at my dummy baby, while my own baby lay dead hundreds of miles away. I could not even take a farewell look at the dearest thing in the world to me."

Three generations of Kenneth Waite's family were circus performers . . . Waite, concealed within the monstrosity below . . . never knew any life but that of the big top.

The clown is much like us workers—reporters and doctors and merchants in seeking refuge from our daily tasks in our chosen hobbies and sports, and it is then that the comedian assumes the attributes of just another human being, for their sports are our sports and their hobbies our hobbies.

Rarely a fair day dawns on the circus tents that there is not a baseball diamond laid out in the "backyard" of the big tops, and there the circus ball team plays the "townies." Arthur Borella's favorite sport is baseball, and he has managed teams composed of performers on the shows with which he has been connected, for years. Likewise, Earl Shipley goes in for the diamond sport, and also is a boxing enthusiast.

Golf has invaded the circus ranks, and the drawbacks of one-night stands do not hinder the clowns and equestrians in their putting and driving. Particularly popular is the Bay Show, the going fever at a high pitch, and each day the past season, a golf course was laid out behind the tents. Slivers Johnson, chief of the functors, proved a past master of the game, and won the championship of the padroom.

CLOSING of the circus season, usually late in October or early November, does not find the circus clown bound for vacation or rest. Unlike many of the performers and working people of the circus, who spend their winters resting, the clowns are in demand the year round.

With the close of the 1929 season, Kenneth Waite and his troupe departed for Berlin for a winter engagement. Earl Shipley leads a troupe of clowns in a St. Louis department store for the Christmas season. Slivers Johnson and wife are booked for the season with an indoor circus at Detroit.

Sometime when you want to test your imagination, just try to conceive of a circus without a clown. Charles Ringling once remarked, "the clown is a necessary evil."

Any youngster will admit the necessity, but will vehemently deny the evil.

The big show comes with its glittering array of attractions, hundreds of performers doing their turns in rapid order throughout the great arena, and yet when night falls the last stake is pulled, and the caravan steals out of town. It is some prank of a circus clown that remains in the memory long after the accomplished equestrians or acrobats are forgotten.

Thus the clown's art ranks high in the value of entertainment offered by the circus, and menial as may seem the work, the clown belongs to the aristocracy of the circus world.

Out of the circus ring, away from the blare of the band and the trumpeting of elephants, such fellows as Arthur Borella, Kenneth Waite, Earl Shipley, Mickey Blue, and so on down the line, might be more easily mistaken for bankers and business men, than be identified as jesters of the sawdust ring. The glamour of the sawdust ring vanishes from their outward appearances when they leave the big top, but it never leaves their hearts.

By A. MORTON SMITH

THE circus was something from fairy-land, a clown, a being from another world. These were my earliest recollections as a small boy in a little town in Missouri.

"Now, after 16 years as a comedian under the big top, the circus still has a romantic glamour for me that will never entirely fade. True, I now see the gaudiness where once all was splendor, but as a whole, it still has the same appeal for a worldly-wise clown, as it had for that same bashful, red-headed kid who aspired to be a king of jesters on the hippodrome track."

That is the simple "confession" of Earl Shipley, for years one of the leading funmakers of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. His reminiscences were punctuated by dabs of white grease paint, forehead to chin, to indicate the bustle amidst the apparent confusion and bustle of the circus padroom or dressing tent, as performers rushed here and there, preparing for the afternoon show. Shipley, unperturbed by the wild scramble, methodically went about his work of transforming a sober face into a grinning buffoon.

Shipley's impromptu remarks bespeak the feelings of many of that vast horde of jesters whose antics are the spice of the circus program.

There seems to be an irresistible charm in the sawdust and the spangles, and a hard-to-conquer lingering fascination in the gold gleam and glitter of the big tent. And yet the circus clown is an individual much like the rest of us—intensely interested in his work; ambitious to excel in his merrymaking; enjoying much the same sports and hobbies as those of us who sit on the board seats, eat peanuts and attempt to focus our eyes on the rings at once.

Varying circumstances have brought leaders into the ranks of professional funmakers.

There is scarcely a better known clown in America than Kenneth Waite, producing clown of Robbins Brothers Circus. Waite is the third generation of a family of circus performers, and he has never known any but the trooper's life, admitting with a touch of pride that "every dollar I have ever made has been for clowning."

IN contrast, there's Arthur Borella, dean of the Self-Floto contingent of merrymakers. Borella was once a choir boy in a Galveston, Texas, church, and he graduated from St. Edward's University, with a business career in view.

Proficiency on the violin was responsible for his advent into the show business, and after years with medicine shows, in vaudeville and other forms of amusement enterprises, Borella approached a manager and announced his ambition to become a clown.

Granted permission to don the grease paint and ruffles, the youngster revealed a knack of tickling the public honey-bone, and for more than a score of years he has been a jester,umps and slaps as "the highest-paid clown in the Texas show."

Earl Shipley, like Borella, is the only member of his family to engage in the show business. He frankly declares that being a clown is a realization of his boyhood ambition. His first opportunity to be a trouper came in 1911, when he joined a tent show dramatic company as a "student" where he learned to play a variety of parts from juvenile to villain. Longing to create laughs, Shipley laid by his East Lynne and Lena Rivers scripts and enlisted the sympathy of a circus clown, secured employment as a concert performer and fill-in clown with Cole Brothers Circus in 1913, thus inaugurating a continuous career as a comic of 16 years.

MICKEY BLUE, who garners a major portion of the chuckles from the patrons of the John Robinson Circus, had a childhood ambition to be another Edwin Booth, and he played hookey from school in New York City to hang over the balcony ledge in the old ten-twenty-thirties melodrama houses absorbing the big scenes, which he would "repeat" at night in the basement of his home with the aid of neighborhood kids.

His entrance into the circus field was an accident. Do-

ing a vaudeville act around San Francisco, he found the dull season approaching and little work in prospect. He purchased an old flivver and, arriving at Paoli, Kansas, he found that Gentry Brothers Circus was billed to open in a few days. He represented himself as a clown, received employment, and was successful. The circus fever got Mickey, and he has not been able to shake off the call of the white tops since that day.

Let no one imagine for a minute that the clown's only requirement is to paint his face, don the standard costume and cavort about the hippodrome track. The clown, like the other performers, must be proficient in any number of capacities in order to make himself useful and hold his job. Take Slivers Johnson, producing clown of the Al G. Barnes Circus, as an example. Slivers not only contributes his share of clown antics, but is a bareback rider of more than ordinary ability, often rides in the races, and puts a trick mule through its paces.

Keneth Waite bears the big burden of clowning on the Robbins outfit, but he spends his mornings soliciting banner advertisements for the elephants to carry in the parade. Arthur Borella, in addition to clowning, is a musician, announcer, lecturer and concert performer. Jack Kippel, producing clown of Christy Brothers Circus, is an acrobat, perch balancer, trapeze performer and tumbler, as well as chief funmaker on the Texas show.

THERE has been gradual evolution in clown ranks for many years. There was the old-time clown who sang comic songs, recited off quips and conundrums and made the ringmaster ridiculous. As time passed, and larger seating capacity in the big top required more rings and more performers, the individual became a medley, a multitude of abstracts. Today, the arena is so large that no one clown can attract all eyes. There must be a small army of the chalk-faced laugh-provokers to amuse the audience.

The feature of the clown's work which keeps the zest and enthusiasm in their routine is the necessity of creating new ideas and trying them out on the public. The joys vie with each other in securing the most applause or laughter for their new walk-arounds or stunts, and they never lose the opportunity to take advantage in burlesque of events or persons in the public eye.

The clown is rated by his inventive genius and his ability

(Copyright, 1930, By EveryWeek Magazine—Printed in U. S. A.)

Confessions of the Clowns

Where America's famous Joeys come from and what they look like without makeup are revealed in this dressing-tent story of the world's most romantic profession

by A. Morton Smith

This article was originally published in the Rocky Mountain News, Denver, Colorado on Sunday April 27, 1930. At left, is the original page from the collection of the Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection.

"The circus was something from fairyland; a clown, a being from another world. These were my earliest recollections as a small boy in a little town in Missouri.

"Now, after 16 years as a comedian under the big top, the circus still has a romantic glamour for me that will never entirely fade. True, I now see the garishness where once all was splendor, but as a whole, it still has the same appeal for a worldly-wise clown, as it had for that same bashful, red-headed kid who aspired to be a king of jesters on the hippodrome track."

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niscences were punctuated by daubs of white grease paint vigorously applied to his features, amidst the apparent confusion and bustle of the circus padroom or dressing tent, as performers rushed here and there preparing for the afternoon show.

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There seems to be an irresistible charm in the sawdust and the spangles, and a hard-to-conquer lingering fascination in the gold gleam and glitter of the big tent. And yet the circus clown is an individual much like the rest of us—

Arthur Borella (back row, second from left) with other clowns on the Sells-Floto Circus circa 1920.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection



intensely interested in his work; ambitious to excel in his merrymaking; enjoying much the same sports and hobbies as those of us who sit on the board seats, eat peanuts and attempt to focus our eyes on three rings at once.

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Proficiency on the violin was responsible for his advent into the show business, and after years with medicine shows, in vaudeville and other forms of amusement enterprises, Borella approached a manager and announced his ambition to become a clown.

Granted permission to don the grease paint and ruffles the youngster revealed a knack of tickling the public funny-bone, and for more than a score of years he has been faking bumps and slaps as "the highest-paid clown in the world."

Earl Shipley, like Borella, is the only member of his family to engage in the show business. He frankly declares that being a clown is a realization of his boyhood ambition. His first opportunity to be a trouper came in 1911, when he joined a tent show dramatic company as a "student," where he learned to play a variety of parts from juvenile to vill-yan. Longing to create laughs, Shipley laid by his East Lynne and Lena Rivers scripts and enlisted the sympathy of a circus clown, secured employment as a concert performer and fill-in clown with Cole Brothers Circus in 1913, thus inaugurating a continuous career as a comic of 16 years.

Mickey Blue, who garnered a major portion of the chuckles from the patrons of the John

Robinson Circus, had a childhood ambition to be another Edwin Booth, and he played hookey from school in New York City to hang over the balcony ledge in the old ten-twenty-third' melodrama houses absorbing the big scenes, which he would "repeat" at night in the basement of his home with the aid of neighborhood kids.

His entrance into the circus field was an accident. Doing a vaudeville act around San Francisco, he found the dull season approaching and little work in prospect. He purchased an old fliver and, arriving at Paoli, Kansas, he found that Gentry Brothers Circus was billed to open in a few days. He represented himself as a clown, received employment, and was successful. The circus fever got Mickey, and he has not been able to shake off the call of the white tops since that day.

Let no one imagine for a minute that the clown's only requirement is to paint his face, don an outlandish costume and cavort about the hippodrome track. The clown, like the other performers, must be proficient in any number of capacities in order to make himself useful and hold his job. Take Slivers Johnson, producing clown of the Al G. Barnes Circus, as an example. Slivers not only contributes his share of clown antics, but is a bareback rider of more than ordinary ability, often rides in the races, and puts a trick mule through its paces.

Kenneth Waite bears the big burden of clowning on



Herman Joseph with other clowns on the Ringing lot circa 1925.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

the Robbins outfit, but he spends his mornings soliciting banner advertisements for the elephants to carry in the parade. Arthur Borella, in addition to clowning, is a musician, announcer, lecturer and concert performer. Jack Klippel, producing clown of Christy Brothers Circus, is an acrobat, perch balancer, trapeze performer and tumbler, as well as chief funmaker on the Texas show.

There has been gradual evolution in clown ranks for many years. There was the old-time clown who sang comic songs, reeled off quips and conundrums and made the ringmaster ridiculous. As time passed, and larger seating capacity in the big top required more rings and more performers, the individual became a medley, a multitude of abstracts. Today the arena is so large that no one clown can attract all eyes. There must be a small army of the chalk-faced laugh-provokers to amuse the audience.

The feature of the clown's work which keep the zest and enthusiasm in their routine is the necessity of creating new ideas and trying them out on the public. The joeys vie with each other in securing the most applause or laughter for their new walk-arounds or stunts, and they never lose the opportunity to take advantage in burlesque of events or persons in the public eye.

The clown is rated by his inventive genius and his ability to create instant amusement upon his advent into the arena, and despite the myriad of stunts and capers which

are constantly being improved upon, the clown always has some laugh-making device which he considers his most popular.

Arthur Borella has been contriving and creating new clown features for almost a quarter of a century, but he believes his biggest hit is his burlesque on wild west show announcements.

After the "thundering herd" of cowboys and cowgirls had raced about the track and the announcer had called attention to the after-show, Borella dashed madly into the tent in cowboy make-up, riding stick horse and firing a cap pistol.

This apparently simple burlesque brought more instantaneous laughter than any of the more complicated and more expensive devices Borella has employed, he declares.

Herman Joseph of Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey, capitalizes on his race, and his funniest stunt follows a "house on fire" scene in which the clowns participate. Joseph runs into the arena in burlesque Jewish make-up, bearing a big banner announcing a fire sale.

Earl Shipley, who was an ambulance driver in France during the World War, seized upon a timely post-war political issue for what he considers his most popular walk-around. The clown impersonated a bewhiskered old man in army uniform, tottering around the ring carrying a sign. "Still Waiting for the Bonus."



The Kenneth Waite clown troupe with Robbins Bros.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

Probably no clown in the business has used more clown features than Kenneth Waite. The Robbins comic not only furnishes all of the clown acts for Fred Bunchanan's circus, but he is in the amusement business on a large scale, employing as many as 60 men with various attractions.

Surveying his host of ideas, Waite unhesitatingly recommends his "rubberneck" girls as his best laugh provokers. The "girls" are usually worked in pairs, two clowns with false heads attached to necks which stretch several feet into the air and can be protruded curiously into the faces of the spectators, much to the amusement of the throng and temporary embarrassment of those singled out.

But with all the alluring features of the business, clowning has its tragedies, its problems and its embarrassments. There are often mishaps which injure the performers. Arthur Borella was laid up for several days sometime ago with a sprained ankle, suffered while chasing a pig in the show. Earl Shipley has suffered a dislocated shoulder on three occasions while clowning. Once he was kicked by a horse in the ring, once he fell from a trick auto, and again while doing, a fall on the ground to create laughs.

One night Arthur Borella was playing with his circus in a little Michigan village. The tent was filled with good-natured farmers and townspeople. He had a new act. He

had apparently stolen a baby, and as he ran round the ring with his rag doll, the clown cop chased him. As he stepped into the dressing tent, the equestrian director handed him a telegram. It was from his home and stated simply that his own baby was dead.

Inside the big tent, the band trumpeted, the ringmasters cracked their whips and the people laughed. The whole circus fun was on. "Come on Arthur, we're waiting for you." came the cry. "I had to go back," Borella recalls. "I had to make others laugh at my dummy baby, while my own baby lay dead hundreds of miles away. I could not even take a farewell look at the dearest thing in the world to me."

The clown is much like us work-weary reporters and bankers and doctors and merchants in seeking refuge from our daily tasks in our chosen hobbies and sports, and it is then that the comedian assumes the attributes of just another human being, for their sports are our sports and their hobbies our hobbies.

Rarely a fair day dawns on the circus tents that there is not a baseball diamond laid out in the "backyard" of the big tops, and there the circus ball team plays the "towners."

Arthur Borella's favorite sport is baseball, and he has managed teams composed of performers on the shows with



Earl Shipley was still doing advance work on the Ringling Show in the 1940s.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection



Mickey Blue with the John Robinson circus circa 1920

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

which he has been connected, for years. Likewise, Earl Shipley goes in for the diamond sport, and also is a boxing enthusiast.

Golf has invaded the circus ranks, and the drawbacks of one-night stands do not hinder the clowns and equestrians in their putting and driving. Particularly on the Barnes Show is the golfing fever at a high pitch, and each day the past season, a golf course was laid out behind the tents. Slivers Johnson, chief of the funsters, proved a past master of the game, and won the championship of the padroom.

Closing of the circus season, usually late in October or early November, does not find the circus clown bound for vacation or rest. Unlike many of the performers and working people of the circus, who spend their winters resting, the clowns are in demand the year round.

With the close of the 1929 season, Kenneth Waite and his troupe departed for Berlin for a winter engagement. Earl Shipley heads a troupe of clowns in a St. Louis department store for the Christmas season. Slivers Johnson and wife are booked for the season with an indoor circus at Detroit.

Sometime when you

want to test your imagination, just try to conceive of a circus without a clown. Charles Ringling once remarked, "the clowns are a necessary evil."

Any youngster will admit the necessity, but will vehemently deny the evil.

The big show comes with its glittering array of attractions, hundreds of performers doing their turns in rapid-fire order throughout the great arena, and yet when night falls the last stake is pulled, and the caravan steals out of town, it is some prank of a circus clown that remains in the memory long after the accomplished equestrians or acrobats are forgotten.

Thus the clown's art ranks high on the value entertainment offered by the circus, and as menial as may seem the work, the clown belongs to the aristocracy of the circus world.

Out of the circus ring, away from the blare of the band and the trumpeting of elephants, such fellows as Arthur Borella, Kenneth Waite, Earl Shipley, Mickey Blue, and so on down the line, might be more easily mistaken for bankers and business men, than identified as jesters of the sawdust ring. The glamour of the sawdust ring vanishes from their outward appearances when they leave the big top, but it never leaves their hearts. **BW**



Slivers Johnson (second from left) with a clown group on Al G. Barnes.

The Ringling Museum, Tibbals Collection

Carl E. Elwell

by Deborah Walk

Over the past year, work has begun on the digitization of the Carl E. Elwell Photographic Scrapbook Collection. This unusual group of photographic albums is a rich resource for information about the American circus in the mid-twentieth century. The collection is important not only for the quality of Carl Elwell's images, but also for the wide range of circuses he photographed and the information he recorded about many of the images. In 1956 alone, the Elwells not only went to the Ringling show in both Akron and Canton, Ohio, but also Mills Bros. Circus (Bedford, Barberton and Wellington, Ohio), the George W. Cole Circus (Canal Fulton, Ohio), and Al G. Miller Bros. Circus (Shelby, Ohio). Now part of the Tibbals Collection at The Ringling, the Carl E. Elwell Photographic Scrapbook Collection was originally acquired by Harold Dunn from the Elwell family.

The 23 albums contain images that span from 1900 to 1958 and document the circuses that travelled near or passed through Akron, Ohio. A die-hard circus fan, Carl E. Elwell spent a great deal of time at the circus and, like other fans of the time, he took many photographs while walking through the backyard. Later, he would hand-tint the images and carefully place them into a single scrapbook by year and circus title. On each page, he drew pen and ink sketches and wrote information about the show location and

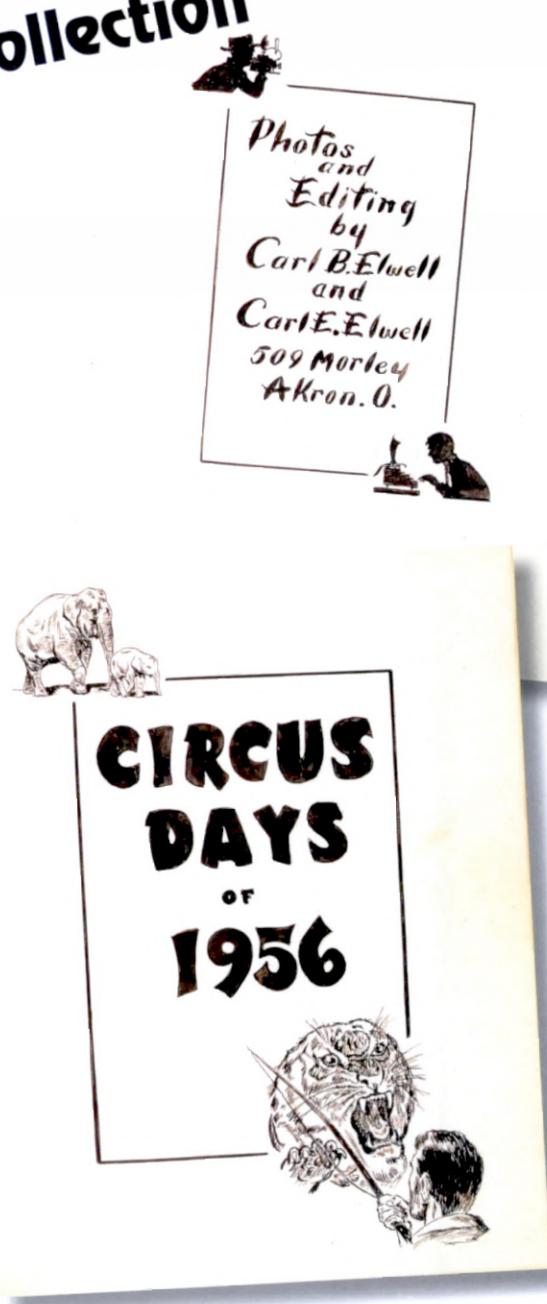


Photographic Scrapbook Collection

date. In some cases, he added tickets, route cards and greeting cards. Finally, besides just identifying the circus, Elwell often added the names of the people in his photographs — performers, owners, workers and fans.

Carl Emmet Elwell (1885-1963) was born in Kent, Ohio, the oldest child of Fred T. and Alice [Williams] Elwell, both Ohio natives. "Since his boyhood days in Kent, when he lived around the corner from the circus lot, he was fascinated by the big top."¹ After high school, he continued his education in Akron, Ohio, where in 1903 he graduated from the Hummel Business College. Elwell started his career as a savings teller and ended it as a vice president for commercial loans. In 1911, Elwell married Agnes Boehm and they had one son, Carl B. Elwell, who would assist his father with building his scrapbooks. Going to the circus was a family affair; his wife and son can be seen in many of the photographs throughout the volumes. Elwell's images show that he had wide access to the back lots of many circuses. He became a member of the Circus Fans Association of America in 1941 and in December, Elwell became one of the founding members of the CFA's Pete Mardo Tent, #34. It was reported that, "color, drama and excitement combined to make the tent raising of the Pete Mardo Tent in Akron, Ohio, an occasion to be remembered."² The Mardos were present and Ted Deppish screened some of his circus films at the event. The second meeting of the tent was held at the Mardos' home.³ After retiring from the circus, the Mardos operated the Tally Ho Tavern in Stow about eight miles from Akron.⁴ Many times the Mardos accompanied the Elwells on their circus visits. Elwell was a well-known fan and was frequently noted in *The Billboard* in the columns "With the Circus Fans" and "Dressing Room Gossip", where the Elwells' circus visits were mentioned. In the April 17, 1943 *Billboard*, it was recounted that the Elwells hosted the March meeting of the Pete Mardo Tent noting that "the Fans also got much enjoyment from Elwell's circus albums, which are unique in that his photographs are supplemented with his own artistic sketches."⁵ In 1943, Elwell was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the tent, a position he held for many years. In 1954, he was the Ohio State Chairman for CFA. Later in 1960, he became a member of the Circus Historical Society. Carl E. Elwell passed away September 17, 1963 in Akron. His death was noted in *The White Tops* — "Ohio Tent Secretary Called to the Big Lot."⁶

The following pages are a sample of the wonders of the 1956 circus season as experienced by Carl Elwell. **BW**



Endnotes

1. "Ohio Tent Secretary Called to the 'Big Lot.'" *The White Tops*, vol. 36, no 5 (September-October), 15.
2. Gregory, Virginia. "Color and Drama at Akron Tent Raising," *The White Tops*, vol. 13, no. 1-2 (December-January), 3
3. Ibid.
4. "Circus News," *The White Tops*, vol. 7 no., 7 (Spring 1934), 6.
5. "With the Circus Fans," vol. 55, no. 16 (April 17, 1943), 37.
6. "Ohio Tent Secretary Called to the 'Big Lot.'" *The White Tops*, vol. 36, no 5 (September-October), 15.

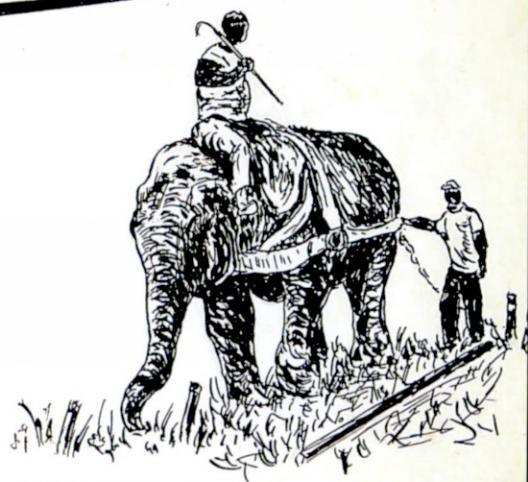
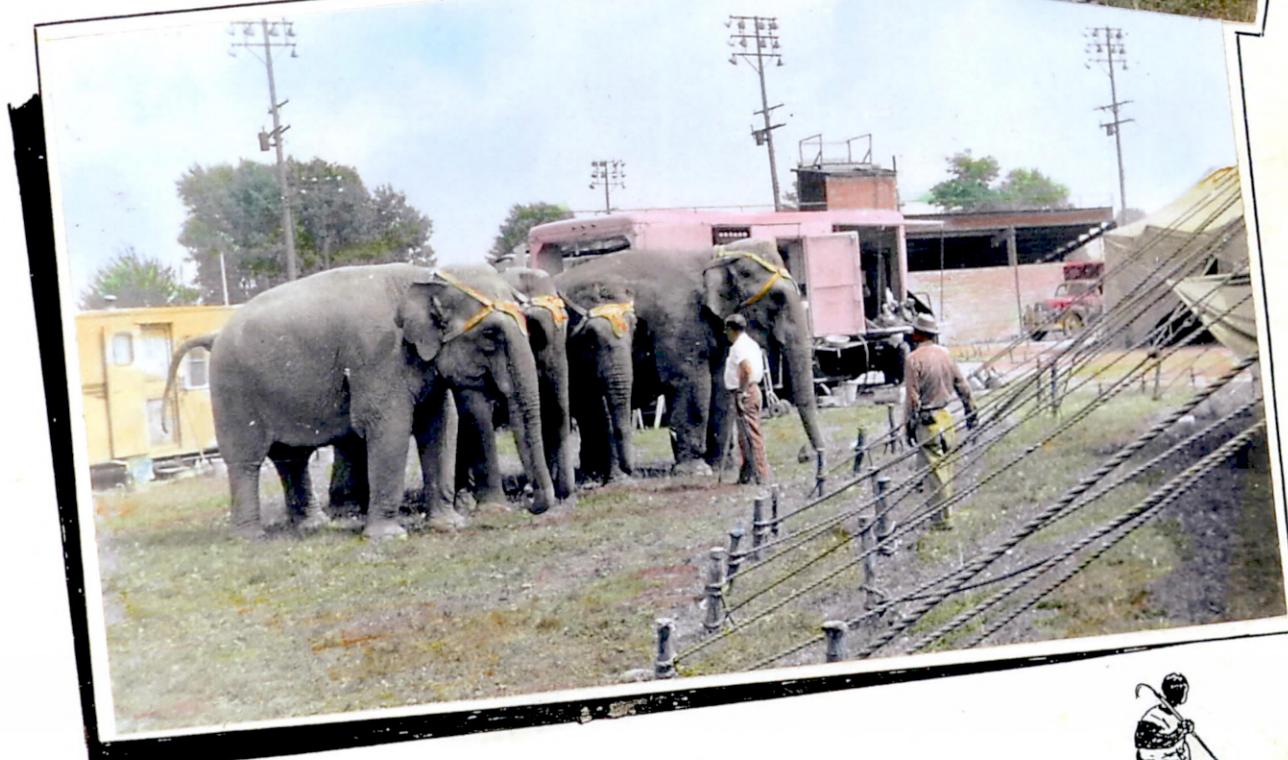
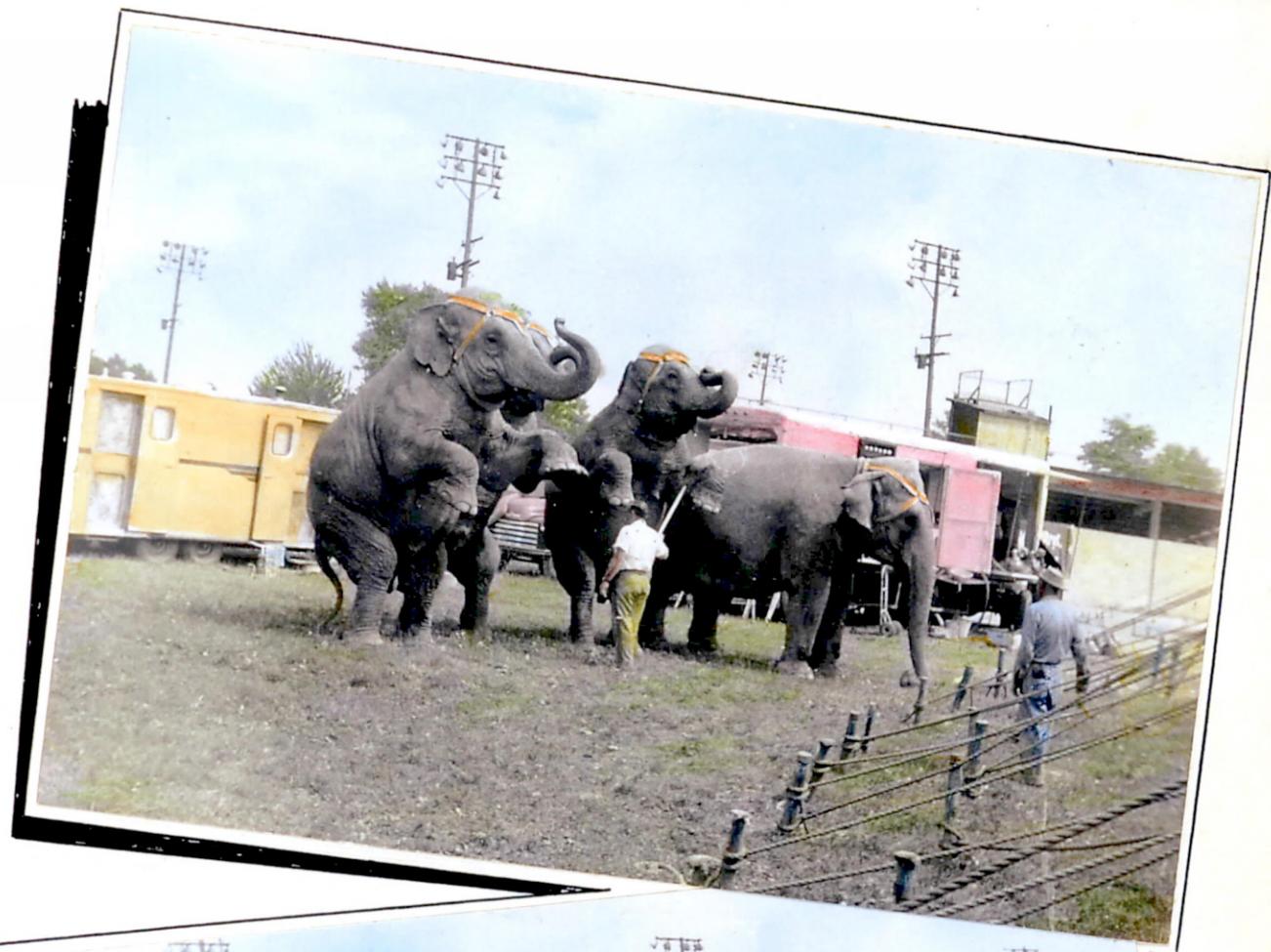


Mills Bros. Circus

17th Annual Tour



Bedford O. April 28-th.
Barberton August 17th.
Wellington October 13th.
1956.



THE
GEORGE W.
COLE
CIRCUS

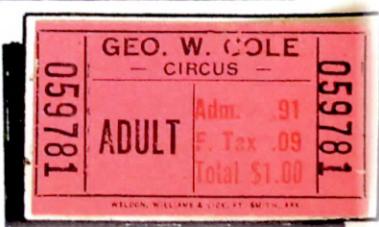
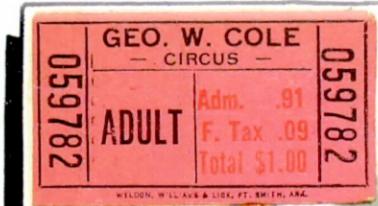
HERB WALTERS MGR.
CANAL FULTON, O.
JUNE 9TH 1956



Ted LaVelda

Harry Rawls

Carleton Smith





Mrs. Harry Rawls.

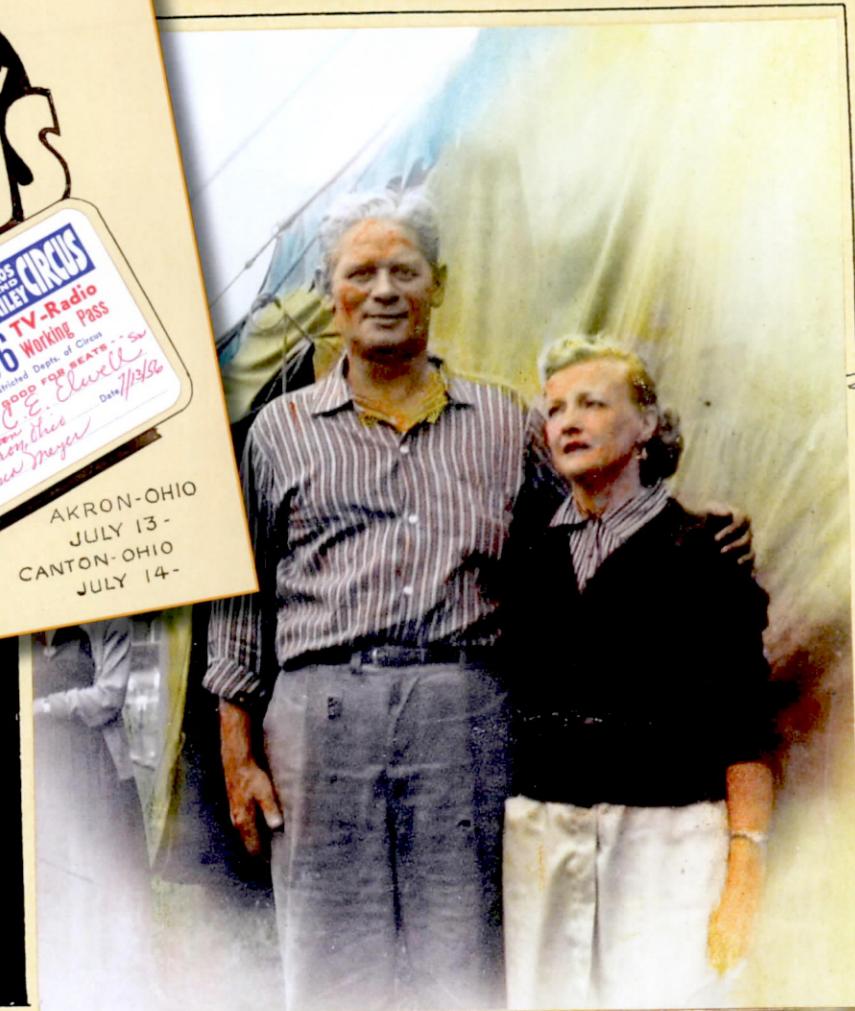
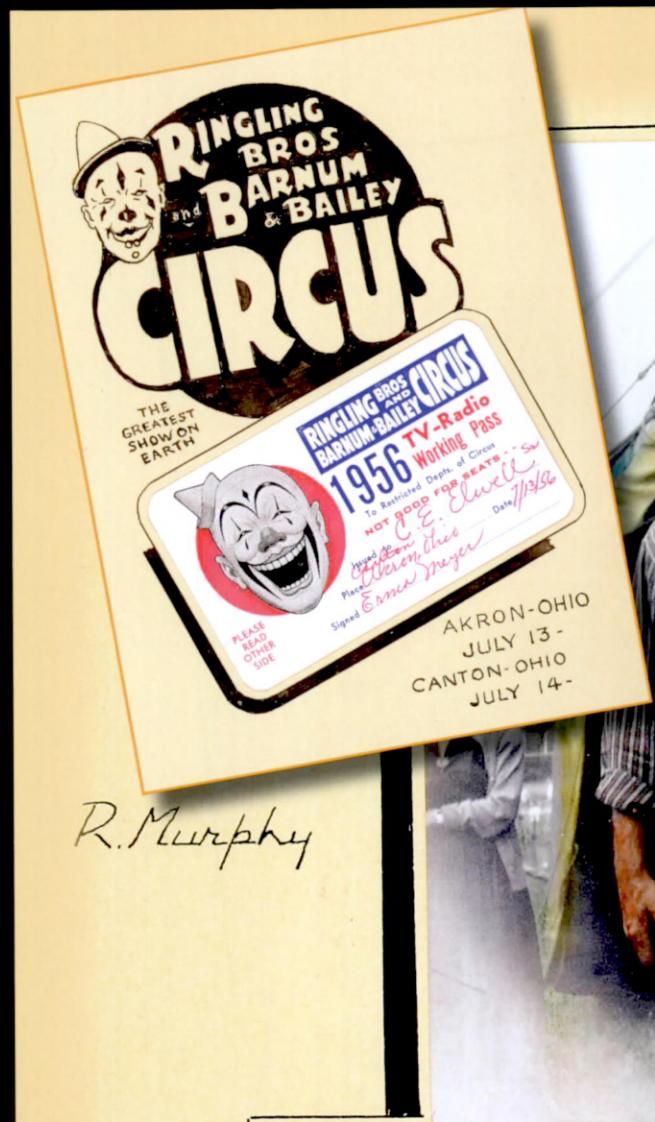
Mr. and Mrs.
Chas. Rex





Dining Department

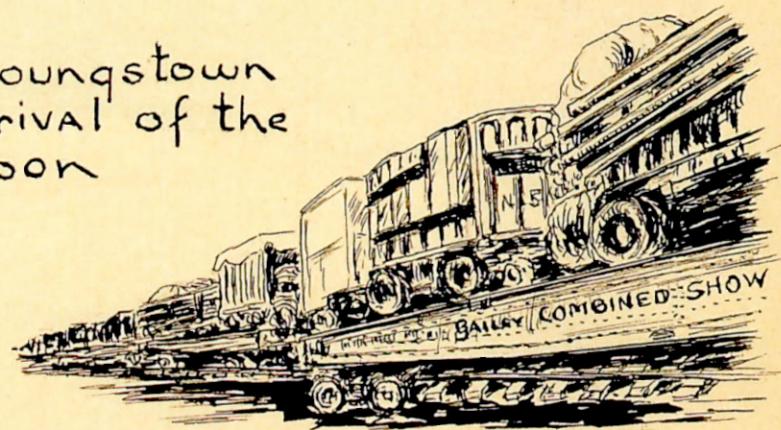




R. Murphy - Rose Murphy - Eddie Jackson
Mrs. Sverre O. Braathen

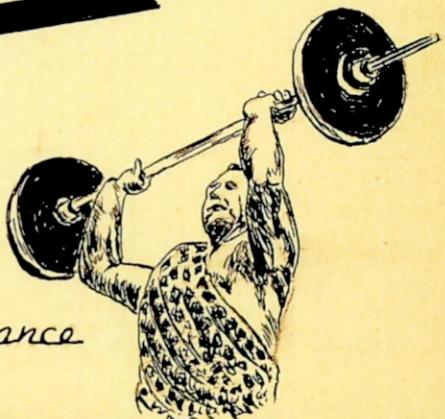


A derailment at Youngstown
delayed the arrival of the
Show till noon





The delay of arrival
caused the cancellation
of the Matinee performance



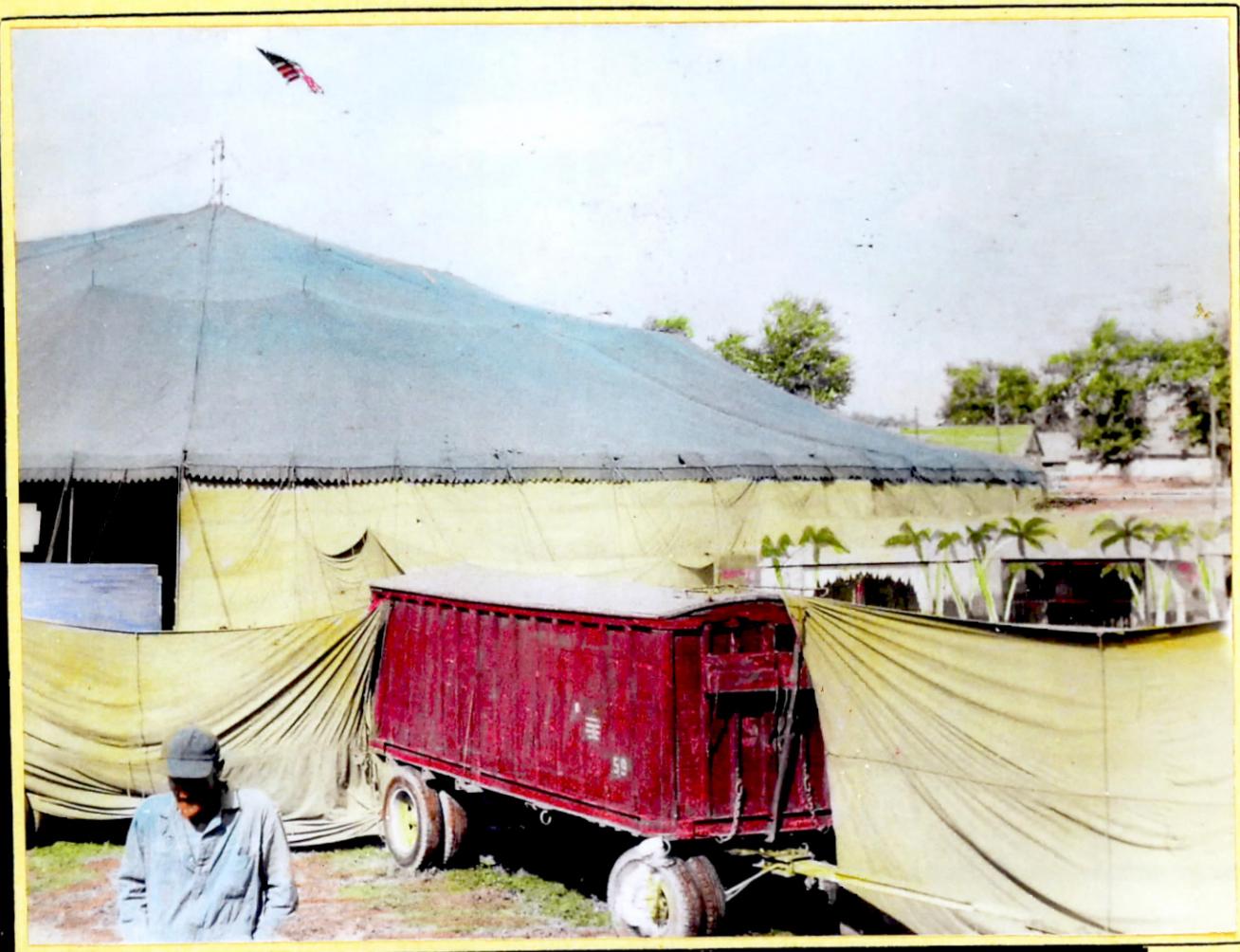
SHOWTIME



Pat Valdo left the Show
in Philadelphia

Bob Dover in charge
of performance





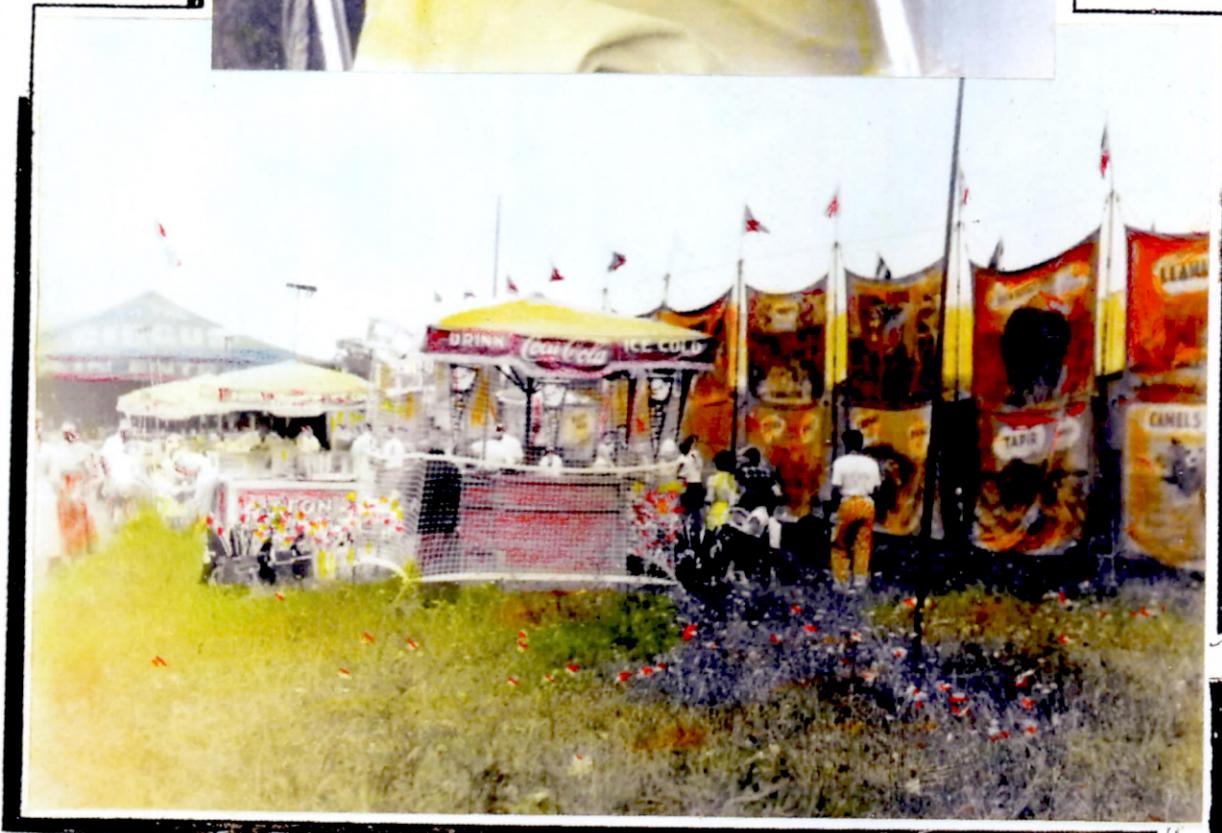
The Last Look at the "Big Top"

AL G.
KELLY &
MILLER ^{BROS.}
CIRCUS
SHELBY-OHIO
AUG. 18. 56.

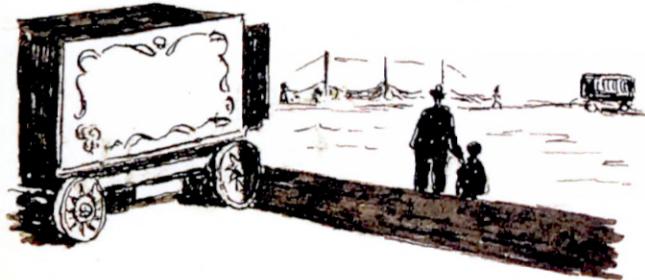
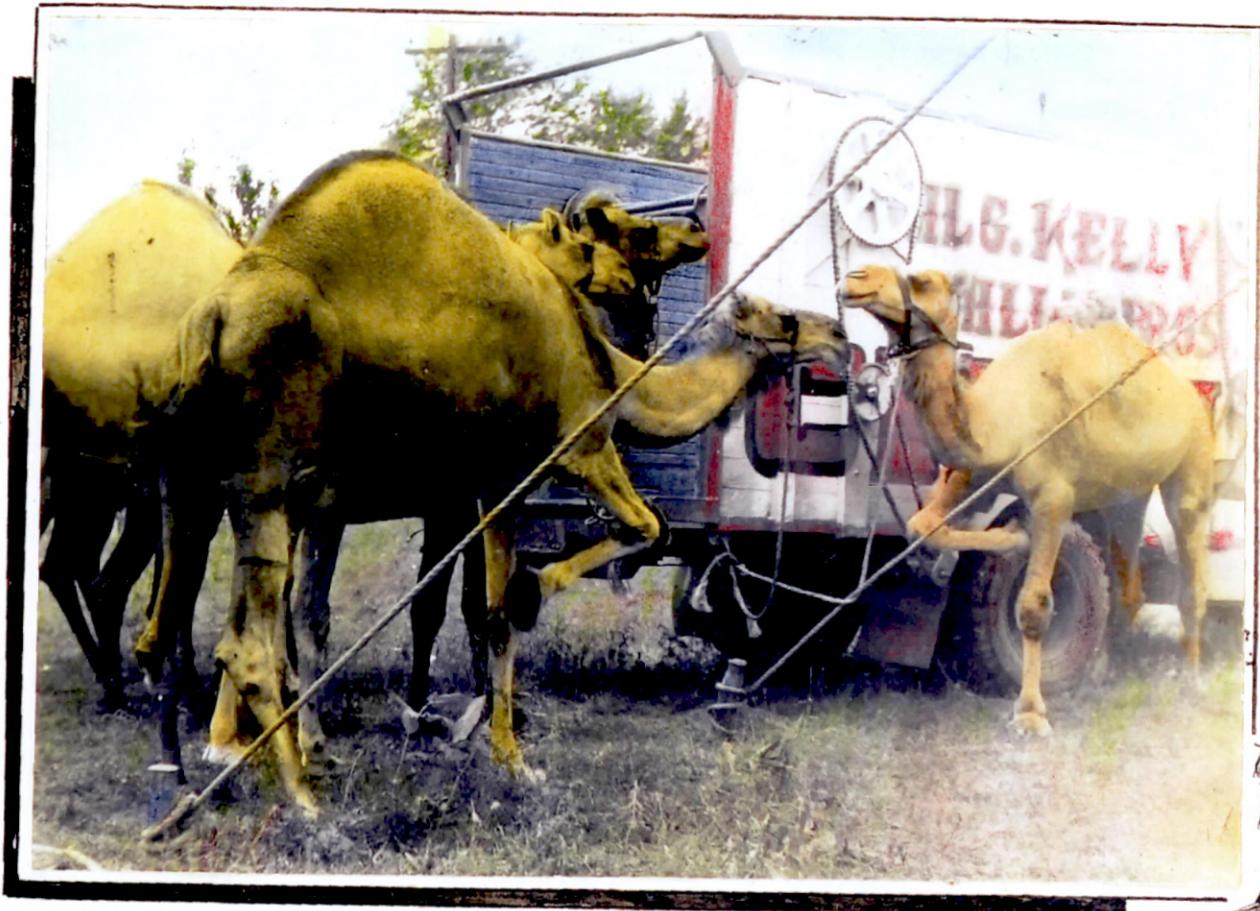
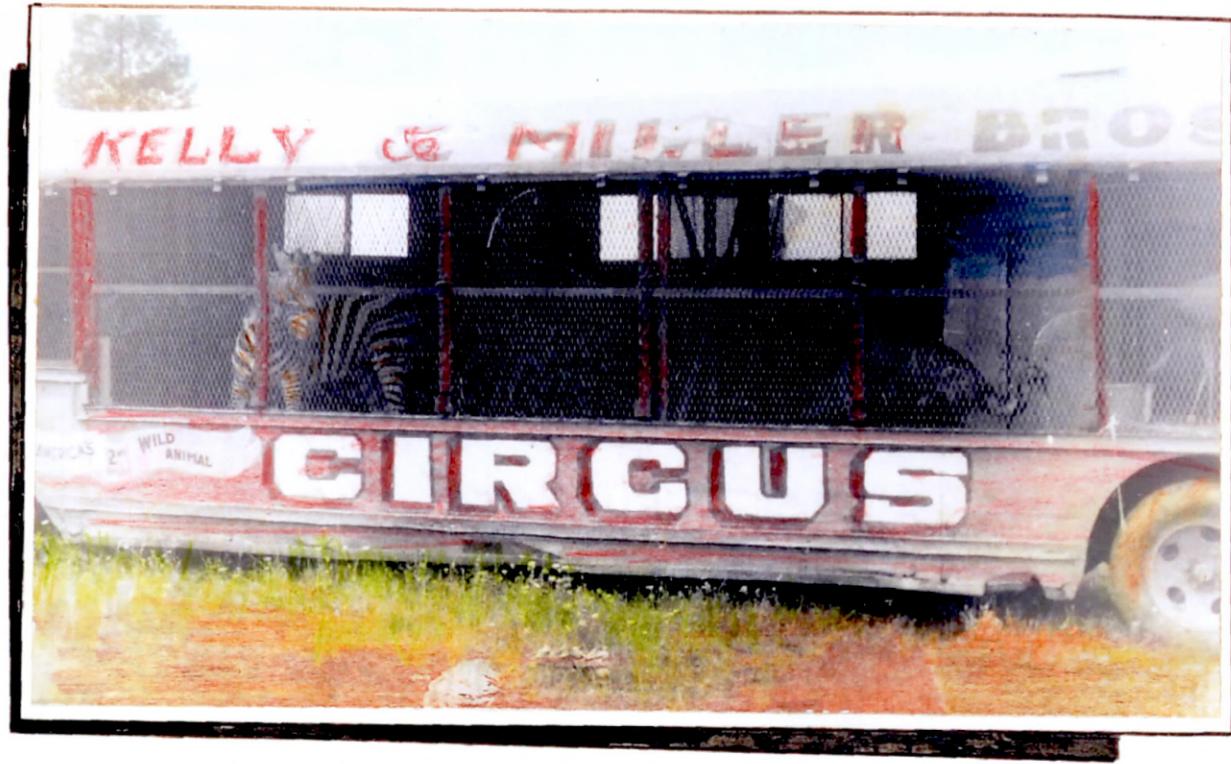


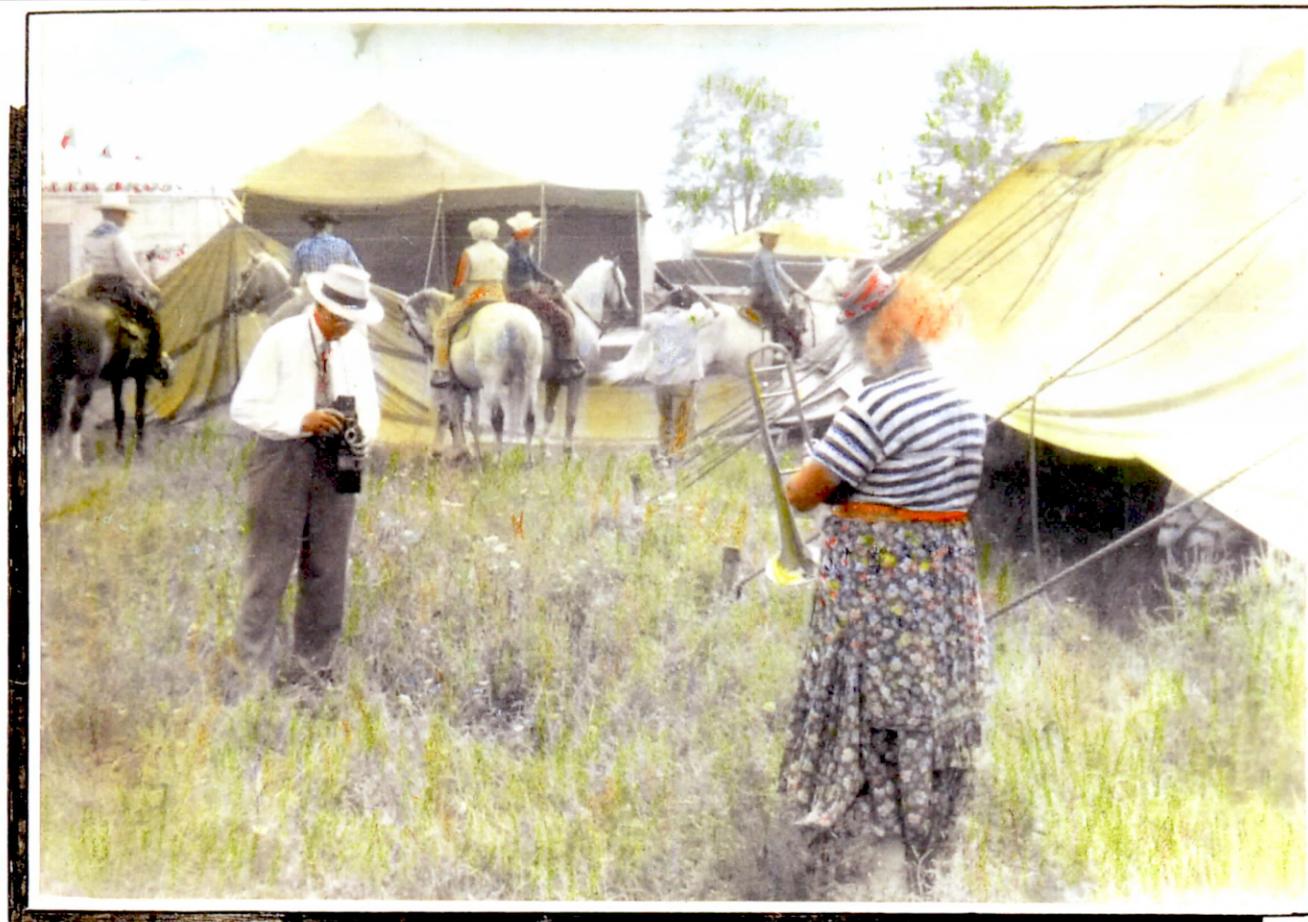
Charles
Parley
Houser

One
of the old
Timers









Roy Thomas Jr.
Minnie Gallagher



